



## Taking the measure of international nurses

By Tina Novotny

In the medical field, breakthrough research means better health outcomes for Canadians. There is also important research news about how health human resources can be greatly improved by providing diverse, culturally competent professionals to the workforce. In the case of the largest employee group in healthcare, nurses, the Conference Board of Canada has released a report on the return on investment in supporting internationally educated nurses (IENs) back into practice. The report, titled *Measuring Returns: Valuing Investments in Internationally Educated Nurses* was produced in collaboration with CARE Centre for IENs, Ontario's first government-funded bridging program for internationally educated professionals.

The study was funded by the Conference Board of Canada's Leaders' Roundtable on Immigration. The Roundtable engages business and government leaders in developing and implementing effective strategies for attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants in order to ensure sustainable competitiveness. It was authored by Dr. Michelle Parkouda, Senior Research Associate, and Janneka Beeksma, Research Associate, of the Conference Board of Canada, and Janet Kwansah, an IEN from Ghana who was involved in developing health policies at a national level and taught at university. As a newcomer, Kwansah completed

the CARE Centre program, and previously worked as a CARE Centre case manager. She is just one of the success stories that reveals how investing in IENs yields significant returns for the Government of Ontario and the federal government, as well as the IENs themselves.

“We’re extremely proud to have collaborated with the Conference Board of Canada on this report, which clearly proves the value of bridging programs like our own,” said Acting CARE Centre Executive Director Joanne Roth. “On average, for every dollar the government invests in bridging IENs to licensure and employment as registered nurses (RNs), they recoup 9:1; for every IEN who passes their exam to work as a registered practical nurse, the return is 3:1. With the looming nursing shortages we know are coming as the baby boom generation retires, IENs can not only fill that labour market gap, they reflect the increasingly multicultural patient population.”

Kwansah is now working as a public health nurse at the Brant County Health Unit, and though she has previously worked at a senior policy level, she enjoys her job promoting health in the community. “Nurses always refer to their profession as a calling, and that’s true in any part of the world,” she says. “The IENs I have met since coming to Canada have a passion to use their skills in a country they have chosen as their new home. Helping them gain recognition for their credentials and experience, and with bridging any educational gaps, will consistently pay huge dividends to that investment.”

Rola El Moubadder is an IEN from Dubai who obtained her RN with CARE Centre’s support. Like Kwansah, she was a government advisor in the United Arab Emirates, and a university-level nurse educator. She is currently a clinical instructor at Centennial College, York University, and CARE Centre, where she is also co-chairing the annual Conference for IENs which will take place November 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> in Toronto. “IENs share their knowledge from established careers in their home countries, but you always hear how much hardship they face to return to nursing in Canada,” says Moubadder. “Those who are lucky enough to find a bridge training program like CARE Centre attest to the difference it made

in their eventual success. To have concrete research published in the *Measuring Returns: Valuing Investments in Internationally Educated Nurses* report confirms what IENs know personally: the return on investment for their wealth of global experience is worth every dollar. CARE Centre was the first to provide a bridging model for any of the registered professions.”

CARE Centre was founded in 2001 and has assisted over 5,000 nurses from more than 100 countries to become registered in Ontario. CARE Centre provides IENs with one-on-one case management, specialized language and communication training, exam preparation, professional development, workplace mentoring and job search support. The new Pre-Arrival Supports and Services (PASS) program funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, connects with IENs in their home countries. CARE Centre was previously profiled by the Conference Board of Canada for organizational excellence (2012). Reports can be downloaded from their e-library at [www.e-library.ca](http://www.e-library.ca) where the *Measuring Returns: Valuing Investments in Internationally Educated Nurses* is now available for purchase.