

# Newsletter

May 2026

## President's Message

Celebrating Mental Health Week and Nursing Week.

An introduction to the new Chair-Elect.

## Myth Busters: Alcohol Withdrawal Management

Dispelling 3 common myths that impacts patient care.

## Mental Health Awareness Month

Ways to care for ourselves as nurses who often carry heavy emotional labour.

Join us at  
our  
MHNIG  
AGM!  
p.7

## Dear MHNIG colleagues,

May always feel like a moment to pause and take stock, but also to celebrate.

The sun is out for longer, the weather is warmer, moods start to improve.

**This month brings Mental Health Week in early May, followed closely by National Nursing Week (May 11-17). Mental Health Week asks us to challenge stigma, promote access, and think broadly about what mental wellness looks like across our communities.**

Nursing Week, in turn, asks us to recognize the profession itself- our knowledge, skill, judgment, as well as the persistence and dedication that it takes to show up to work every day.

**Taken together, they also form a reminder that caring for mental health and supporting the people who provide that care are inseparable goals.**

## Complete our membership survey

More info on p.7

May is an opportunity for us to do both- to celebrate and come together, while caring for ourselves. **The RNAO 101st AGM will take place May 28-29, 2026, with the MHNIG AGM on the first day, running from 2-4pm. While both events are made of formal business and celebrations of our profession, for me the real celebrations happen outside of that.** It's when we informally come together, between sessions, in the hallways, that it feels like we're actually creating the bonds that form a professional community we CAN celebrate.

# Newsletter

May 2026

I know this is several messages in a row where I've talked about **our upcoming AGMs!** But only because they are such a great opportunity I want our members to know about.

On that note, there is another fact that I'd like to share with our members for celebration- **Tiffany Emily Cheng, the currently serving Communications ENO, has stepped up and been serving in our open Chair Elect role.** Please join me in formally welcoming her to the role!

Wishing you a May filled with celebration and cheer,  
Andrew Marlowe, RN, MN, MBA  
Chair, MHNIG



Tiffany Cheng RN, BScN  
MHNIG Comms ENO & Chair-Elect

**Dearest reader,**

Stepping into the Chair-Elect was a decision I would not have imagined doing a year ago. I started serving on MHNIG's executive board as Communications ENO since January 2025 last year. My largest project so far has been revamping the newsletter and getting it published every month ensuring that there is relevant content mental health nurses can apply in their practice. It's been an incredibly rewarding experience working with a devoted group of mental health nurses from all across Ontario to organize events, spread awareness, and collaborate. As I step into this new role, I hope that I'll connect with more of you so that we can collectively envision how we can grow MHNIG together.

May 2026

## Myth Busters: Alcohol Withdrawal Management

Written by Eliza Chandy RN, BScN  
MHNIG Social Media ENO



### Myth 1: Just quit "Cold Turkey"

**The Reality:** Individuals with alcohol dependence **must never stop abruptly** or quit "cold turkey." Doing so can lead to fatal complications, such as withdrawal-related seizures or delirium tremens. Patients must be taught to gradually taper/reduce their alcohol intake, or present to the ED or inpatient detox to ensure safe withdrawal management.

### Myth 2: Start CIWA protocol immediately upon admission/presentation to the hospital

**The Reality:** Acute alcohol withdrawal typically takes place in a 12–72 hour window after the last drink. Many hospital protocols automatically discontinue CIWA after three negative scores. **Therefore, if CIWA scores are initiated too early, the protocol may end prematurely, before withdrawal symptoms actually begin.** This results in the patient being unmonitored during the acute withdrawal period, posing a significant risk for seizures. To prevent this, it is suggested to only initiate the CIWA protocol once the patient begins to exhibit withdrawal symptoms.

May 2026

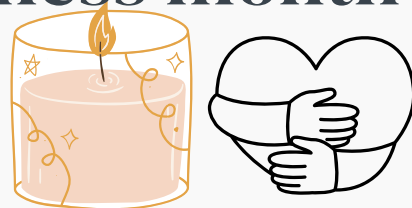
## Myth 3 : DTs (Delirium Tremens) is the same as Alcoholic Hallucinosis

**The Reality:** These are two different conditions with very different levels of severity and mortality.

- **Delirium Tremens (DTs)** is the **most severe complication of alcohol withdrawal**. It typically occurs 48–96 hours after the last drink. Symptoms include severe confusion, disorientation, hallucinations (predominantly visual), and severe autonomic hyperactivity including agitation, diaphoresis, hypertension, low-grade fever, and tachycardia.
- **Alcoholic Hallucinosis** is significantly less dangerous than DTs. The onset is within the typical 12–24 hour withdrawal period. While the patient sees or hears things that are not there, similar to delirium tremens, they are typically oriented to person, place, and time, and their vital signs are usually otherwise stable.

## The Emotional Labour of Nursing: Caring for Patients & ourselves this Mental Health Awareness month

Written by Ashley Mohamed, BSc, RN, BScN  
MHNIG Policy and Political Action ENO



I still remember the first crisis situation I had to de-escalate as a nurse. I think many nurses remember their first experience managing a difficult situation, because those moments stay with us throughout our careers. **As rewarding as nursing can be, there is also an unpredictable and chaotic side of the profession that is often only fully understood by those working in healthcare...**

# Newsletter

May 2026

---

I remember how I felt beforehand, the events leading up to it, and how I felt immediately after. I also remember a senior nurse checking in with me afterward and saying, **“This may have been your first, but it will not be the last time you experience something like this in your career.”** I remember thinking: **Is this normal?**

Nurses hold a unique position in healthcare, as we are often among the most patient-facing members of a person’s circle of care. This can be incredibly meaningful and rewarding, but it can also be emotionally challenging. **During Mental Health Awareness Month, it is important to recognize that while we care for the mental health of our patients, we must also make space to care for our own.**

### Check in with yourself regularly

We as nurses are quick to do mental health assessments on patients however, we may forget to check in with our own mental health after a difficult shift. Don’t be afraid to take some time to debrief with yourself and take a moment to determine what our own stress level is at the moment, how we handled the situation, how we felt, etc.

### Utilize the resources in your community and workplace

As much as we advocate for clients to get help, it is also important we familiarize ourselves with the resources available to us as nurses. Most hospitals and organizations have their own mental health supports available, whether it be crisis support, brief counselling, or even using your benefits to get psychotherapy.

### Take self-care moments as much as possible

Whatever self-care looks like to you, do it frequently and with intention. I love to read and write in my journal, but this can look different from person to person. Find the best way to de-stress for you and do it regularly to ensure you do not experience burnout!

### Create a positive work-life balance

Take the time to ensure you have balance in the amount you work and for the other important things in your life. As nurses it can be easy to get enthralled in our work and bring it home with us, but it is important that we take time outside of work to do things for ourselves.

May 2026

## Mental Health RNAO Nursing Week Events

From May 11-17, to celebrate Nursing Week RNAO is hosting multiple online and in-person webinars, learning sessions, and gatherings. We'll feature a two that are related to mental health nursing, but make sure you check out all of them!

[Link to the RNAO Nursing Week Website](#)

**Street Mental Health Handbook**

Care Delivery Across the Spectrum of Homelessness  
Simon Hatcher  
Liz Frye  
Kim Van Herk

Springer

**Street Mental Health Handbook**

RNAO

MAY 12, 2026, 1 P.M. TO 2 P.M.

**Street Mental Health Handbook**

Register now

Offered online!  
Click here to register and learn more!  
<https://rnao.ca/events/street-mental-health-handbook>

“In 2024–2025, the Street Mental Health Handbook: Care Delivery Across the Spectrum of Homelessness was developed in collaboration with street psychiatrists to support providers working with people who are homeless and living with mental illness. This session draws on the handbook’s core themes and offers a practical, nurse centred exploration of street mental health practice...”

**Insights from the Field**

Considering the Impact of Aging & Substance Use in our Practice

RNAO

MAY 14, 2026, 10 A.M. TO 11AM

**Insights from the Field: Considering the Impact of Aging & Substance Use in our Practice**

Register now

Offered online!  
Click here to register and learn more!  
<https://rnao.ca/events/street-mental-health-handbook>

“Assumptions, internal bias and societal stigma all shape how nurses understand and care for people. These dynamics become particularly complex at the intersection of aging, age-related changes and substance use disorder. This keynote presentation explores how these intersecting factors influence nursing practice and decision-making, and how greater awareness can improve care for older adults with lived and living experience of substance use...”

# Newsletter

May 2026



## Our MHNIG 2026 Membership Survey is here!

This survey is completely voluntary. A summary of the responses will be shared with the MHNIG Executive team. The MHNIG Executive team will then use your responses to guide our work in the coming years. Your time and feedback is important to us, as such this survey is estimated to take about 5 minutes.

## MHNIG Annual General Meeting

In-person and virtual

Thurs May 28 from 2-4pm

Hosted at the RNAO AGM

RNAO Home Office, 500-4211 Yonge Street,  
Toronto, ON  
Orange Boardroom

Register here!!  
<https://chapters-igs.rnao.ca/events/368>

## Follow us on:



[The MHNIG website](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



**CONTACT US**

[mentalhealthnursingrno@gmail.com](mailto:mentalhealthnursingrno@gmail.com)

or through our website contact page

We look forward to connecting with you!

