



Resolution #2

Protection of Health Care Workers and Patients in Safe Patient Handling

WHEREAS, healthcare worker occupations have one of the highest risks of experiencing on-the-job injuries that result in permanent disability, loss of income, and loss of advancement of careers in healthcare field and,

WHEREAS, repetitive musculoskeletal injuries are the primary cause of disability in health care workers, and,

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature passed RCW 70.41.390 in 2010 directing hospitals to implement safe patient handling policies and procedures and further directed that hospitals create safety committees to address concerns about implementation of safe patient handling policies, and

WHEREAS, the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) a division within the Centers for Disease Control issued reports and recommendations in 2007 for nursing homes, and in 2013, issued a report to improve hospital safety to implement workplace policies to decrease musculoskeletal injuries in healthcare workers, and,

WHEREAS, equipment to reduce musculoskeletal injuries to health care workers as well as reduce falls in patient populations and residential care settings has been available since 2007, and,

WHEREAS, WSNA published guidelines for safe patient handling in 2010 yet, results of the WSNA 2017 Nurses Survey revealed over 50 % of 2000 respondents stated they had suffered an injury related to lifting a patient, and that safe patient handling policies are not consistently implemented in hospital settings, and,

WHEREAS, manual lifting by health care workers continues to be taught in all levels of health care education based on out-of-date curricula that continues to teach body mechanics, and that hospital and long-term care plans continue to prescribe 1 and 2-person lifts for transfers.

RESOLVED, that WSNA encourage all nurses in Washington State to assess and report health care employer compliance with RCW.70.41.390 Safe Patient Handling and WAC 296-800-130 (safety committee and safety meetings) including the requirement that safety committee membership includes RN's and other front-line health care workers; and

RESOLVED, that WSNA support immediate enforcement of safe lifting law; and



RESOLVED, that WSNA collaborate with hospitals, assisted living and skilled nursing centers and other health care employers to promote policies and procedures to reduce human lifting across all care settings; and

RESOLVED, that WSNA promote policies and procedures that prevents disciplinary action of health care workers who decline to transfer or move patients in the absence of appropriate assistive devices; and

RESOLVED, that the language in published guidelines for safe patient movement be changed to “requirements” for purposes of funding reimbursement; and

RESOLVED, that WSNA encourage all employers provide working, and up-to-date transfer assist devices, and provide training and support for the use of these devices; and

RESOLVED, that WSNA provides outreach to educators of healthcare workers to provide a curriculum and training that teaches safe body mechanics, minimizes manual lifting, and emphasizes positioning patients through the use of safe patient handling and equipment.

Submitted by Professional Nursing & Health Care Council October 24, 2018

Updated May 2, 2019