

MEDIA RELEASE

Northeastern Four Urban Hospitals and NE CCAC United to Bring more Geriatric Services to Region

November 29, 2010 -- This past Friday, the four HUB Hospitals for Northeastern Ontario – North Bay General, Sault Area Hospital, Sudbury Regional Hospital, and Timmins District Hospital— along with the North East Mental Health Centre (NEMHC) and the North East CCAC unanimously supported a motion designed to bring more specialized geriatric services to the North East.

Under the leadership of the North East LHIN, the group has been meeting regularly to discuss areas of common interest and the impact of thinking as a system.

“Health care is not just hospitals, it’s about community wellness,” said Elaine Pitcher, Chair of the Sault Area Hospital. “We need health care that is patient-focused not organization-focused.”

At the top of the agenda remains the alternate level of care (ALC) patient issue –the mainly frail elderly patients being cared for in hospital beds instead of in a more appropriate setting.

At the NE LHIN hosted meeting, the CEOs and Chairs of the North East’s largest health care providers heard from Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke, the region’s first-ever Geriatrician and head of the North East Specialized Geriatric Services program. The program, in its second year, was started with seed money put forward by the City of Greater Sudbury and operational funding by the NE LHIN. Dr. Clarke leads a team of RNs, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and support staff whose goal is to help seniors with complex health needs remain in the community and out of hospital.

The program has seen tremendous success with more than 1,000 referrals across the region (with help of Ontario Telemedicine). However, its success has resulted in a wait list of five months. In the short-term, the program would like to add two Nurse Practitioners, a Geriatric Case Coordinator, and a Clerk to help reduce the wait list and better serve the entire region. In the long-term, it hopes to recruit four more geriatricians.

Despite the fact that the North East has the highest growing demographic group of seniors at 17% and the highest ALC ratio at 30%, it has no recognized Regional Geriatric Program funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) that five other regions of the province enjoy including Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa and Toronto.

In keeping with the MOHLTC ‘s (seven) new initiatives, which work towards the idea of “healthy seniors make healthy communities,” the regional HUBS group would like to see more resources going to develop a formal Regional Geriatric Program.

“Only by coming together can we make a difference in solving the health care issues in our area,” said Tom Trainor, Chair of the NE CCAC.

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The following motion was passed on Friday:

“Be it resolved that: The North East Hub Hospitals and the NE CCAC endorse the North East Specialized Geriatric Service’s Strategic Plan as Presented on November 26, 2010 and support advocating for a Regional Geriatric Program.”

Louise Paquette, CEO of the North East LHIN, said all the Hub Hospital and the NE CCAC were impressed by Dr. Clarke’s presentation and unanimous in their support for more geriatric services.

“All of the hospitals and the NE CCAC agreed that a Regional Geriatric Program is one great way we can help seniors remain in their homes and in community rather than in hospital,” she said. “I am also constantly impressed by the incredible spirit of cooperation and collaboration that is shared at these Hub hospital meetings.”

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