

exchange

Connecting with providers

Groups in the north, central and south reflect the uniqueness of their communities

"To begin integrating programs and services, and even business processes, we first needed to build trust and shared understanding. This group has really helped us do that."

Pat Campbell, CEO of Grey Bruce Health Services, is talking about the Grey Bruce Integrated Health Coalition, which she co-chairs with Sandy Stockman, Executive Director of the Grey Bruce Community Health Corporation. Launched in 2001, the Coalition brings together health service providers across the two northern counties of the South West LHIN on a quarterly basis. More recently, similar groups – the Huron Perth Providers Council and the South Service Providers Council – have taken shape in the central and south areas. Together these three "area provider tables" give the South West LHIN a direct pipeline to the knowledge and wisdom of local health care providers.

The Grey Bruce group includes two representatives from each service provider organization – one a senior staff person, and the other a member of the Board. Three years ago, the group decided to move beyond information-sharing to action. Since then, they

have worked on issues such as chronic disease prevention and management and health education. Says Pat, "Taking some action and making things happen helped us come together." Over the next year, the group will be exploring transportation challenges in the Grey Bruce area, working on a toolkit for their chronic disease prevention and management framework, and assessing end-of-life resources.

The Huron Perth group is structured similarly. Co-chaired by Cathy Ritsema, Executive Director of the Alzheimer Society of Huron County and Susan Rae, Administrator of Knollcrest Lodge, the group shares information, discusses issues of mutual concern, advocates for resources, and sets annual priorities for local integration and coordination projects.

In the south, there was no existing group when the South West LHIN was formed, so the LHIN played an active role in its development. Jackie Wells, Executive Director of VON Middlesex-Elgin, was inspired to be part of the process while participating on the South West LHIN's Strategic Advisory Group. Says Jackie:

"Working with other providers from other sectors opened my eyes to the fact that, no matter where we are, we all have similar issues." With such a large number of providers in the south, the membership of the group is representative, based on the number of providers in each sector. The Council is linking with local groups of providers in Elgin, Oxford, Middlesex and London. "We have communication with every part of the south area," says Jackie, who now co-chairs the Council along with Cate Melito, Executive Director of the West Elgin Community Health Centre. "We help to bring it all together."

Jackie describes the three provider groups as "information highways that go in both directions." She adds: "Working together helps us look at the impact of

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Building on innovation

A message from Tony Woolgar, CEO

If ever there was a time for creativity and innovation in health care, it's now. Our system faces many challenges, including growing patient populations, health professional shortages and escalating costs. To ensure the sustainability of our system, we must find new ways to work together and deliver integrated care. That's why the Ontario government has organized the second *Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo*.

The Expo is an opportunity for health care providers from across Ontario to celebrate successes and share ideas and information. In all more than 2,000 attended the two-day event, which offered more than 35 workshops and 150 displays. More than 300 projects were highlighted at the Expo, and I'm very proud to say that 10 were from the South West, including two finalists and one winner.

This history of partnership and innovation within our area lays a solid foundation for the future of health care in the South West. As the LHIN works with its partners to develop integrated approaches to health services delivery, we will be building on the creativity and innovation of these and other groups across the area. Please take a moment to read about some of the innovative projects that were recognized at the Expo, and join me in congratulating the participants.

Giving recruitment a kickstart

HealthKick Huron was the big winner at the Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo in the Innovations in Health Human Resources category. Says Laura Overholt, HealthKick Huron Project Manager, "We saw it as recognition that small communities can be innovative and make a big difference."

HealthKick Huron is a long-term approach to the challenge of attracting and keeping health professionals in a rural community. One of its most novel elements is MedQuest, a one-week camp for Grade 10 and 11 students offered in partnership with the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Western Ontario and held in Huron County in July. It provides campers with a variety of realistic experiences in the field of medicine – from delivering robotic babies and reading X-rays, to splinting fractures and performing simple sutures. "We want campers to have a chance to consider the scope of health care careers that are available," says Laura. "We give them some practical experience and help them develop a network, so they can make career decisions early in their education that will eventually take them along the path of a career in health care." The camp culminates in a mock disaster, in which the campers portrayed the victims.

Another element of the program is the Registered Practical Nurse part-time training program offered through Georgian College in Huron County. HealthKick pays half the tuition fees and books for the students, many of whom are already working in long-term care or other health sectors. "This keeps the people who are already in the

system," says Laura, "and for those who aren't yet in the industry it's an opportunity to get training without leaving their families or current jobs."

Other HealthKick activities include work placements for local high school and university students, temporary placements for recent health graduates, support for students in the International Medical Graduate Certification Program, and a Community Ambassador program to help with professional recruitment.

The results are impressive. Nine family physicians were recruited to Huron County in the first year of the program, more than 400 students participated in various HealthKick activities, 25 enrolled in the Georgian College program, three medical students completed six-week electives in the region, and 29 medical residents visited Huron and Perth health care facilities during a special recruitment weekend.

HealthKick now wants to help other communities facing similar challenges. "Our program is unique in its approach to addressing the shortage of health care professionals in our area, but it's a very adaptable and flexible model that could work in other places," Laura says. "We see it as part of our responsibility to share what we do."

The South West LHIN's Health Human Resources Advisory Group recently heard a presentation from HealthKick and will be considering how its innovative approach could be applied in other parts of the South West.



The power of working together

"We all sit down at the same table, talk through the challenges and develop a common workflow, tools and ways of measuring success."

That's Carol Merton, a Client Services Manager with the South West CCAC, describing the CCAC-Hospital Integrated Navigation Network, another bright idea from the South West area that was recognized at the *Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo* earlier this year.

The framework was initially developed to find solutions to the hospital bed shortage challenge. A Collaborative Projects Steering Committee was formed, chaired jointly by the South West CCAC and the hospital, and staff from both organizations worked together to develop new approaches to long-term care placement from hospital, including role descriptions, patient information packages and performance management tools. As a result, Alternate Level of Care days dropped from 18% to 12%. A similar approach for total knee replacements reduced the average length of stay.

The Committee is now working with 18 different projects, including one to connect patients who are scheduled for breast surgery with South West CCAC services. Says Carol: "The Committee makes decision-making faster and helps promote seamless care delivery."



Left to right: Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman with HealthKick Huron Project Manager Laura Overholt and Physician Recruitment Officer Gwen Devereaux.

Research that makes a difference

Sometime in the not-too-distant future everyone will use electronic health records (EHRs). In addition to making the health system more efficient, EHRs will provide a rich source of research data. But getting from here to there isn't easy.

The Thames Valley Family Practice Research Unit, Ontario's only health system-linked research group focused solely on primary care, was a finalist at the Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo. It was recognized for an innovation that was part of Deliver Primary Health-care Information (DELPHI). DELPHI is a larger project designed to support the implementation of electronic health records in family physicians' offices and use the resulting data to understand and improve the quality of care.

"Data from DELPHI helps us measure the workload of primary health care practitioners from several disciplines," says Dr. Moira Stewart, Director for the Centre for Studies in Family Medicine at the University of Western Ontario and the principal investigator of the DELPHI project. "It also provides insight into the problems people visit their family physicians for and the care provided. Ultimately the results of this study provide a more comprehensive picture of primary health care and allow international comparisons."

The project has produced several key findings. It's clear, Dr. Stewart says, that implementing EHRs is a challenging task for busy family doctors. The study underlined the importance of building relationships with participants and offering continuous support during implementation.

The unit's submission, *International Classification of Primary Care*, was a finalist in the Innovations in Health Information Management category.

Other South West projects recognized at the Expo

All on One Page (serving high-needs residents in long-term care) [Facilities Operators Group of Grey Bruce](#)

Planning Surgical Services across a Health Network [Grey-Bruce Health Network](#)

No Stone Unturned: Overhauling work processes (implementing electronic charts, etc.) [South West Community Care Access Centre](#)

No Pain, Lots of Gain (fast track arthroplasty program) [South West Community Care Access Centre](#)

The REACH Home Care Delivery System (satellite-based home monitoring for people with mental illness) [St. Joseph's Health Care, London](#)

Partnership to support choice in end-of-life care [thehealthline.ca](#) (South West End-of-Life Care Network and South West Community Care Access Centre)

Lean on Me (training program for volunteers with the frail elderly) [Third Age Outreach](#) (St. Joseph's Health Care, London)

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change on the larger community. This helps us play outside our sandbox."

"Now that the South West LHIN's Priority Action Teams are under way, the three provider groups will continue to be an important source of local knowledge and insight," says Kelly Gillis, Senior Director of Planning, Integration and Community Engagement. "Our idea is that as Priority Action Teams get into their detailed planning, we'll be able to come to these groups to understand information, review recommendations and champion implementation. Local input and leadership will be key to our future successes."

Putting best practice into practice

Donna Scott, a registered nurse with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Best Practices Initiative, describes herself as a knowledge broker. In her role, she meets with Long-Term Care (LTC) home administrators and directors of care to determine if their policies and procedures incorporate evidence-based practice into resident care. Many LTC homes are pleased to confirm that much of what they currently do is consistent with best practices.

"Best practice coordinators serve as knowledge champions, facilitators and often cheerleaders when working with directors of care and front-line workers. We help ensure the best practices they aspire to are, in fact, adopted," explains Donna.

"Best practice" is an evidence-based approach that uses proven techniques or methods to achieve a better outcome: in this case, better approaches to providing quality care in LTC homes. In health care, research has shown that many best practices are not taken up because they are perceived as too overwhelming to implement by busy front-line health workers.

The Best Practice Initiative, launched in 2005, is a three-year ministry-funded project that focuses on the use of best practice guidelines for fall management, oral care and minimal

restraint use, to name a few. Donna's aim is to connect with each of the 109 long-term care homes across two LHINs (South West and Erie St. Clair) to ensure that workers are aware of and using best practices.

In the South West, Administrator Brenda Ohm says the goal of the Southampton Care Centre is to become a restraint-free home while maintaining resident safety. With the help of the Nurse Strategy Initiative and Donna's support, the Centre is enhancing quality of life for the residents by working to improve mobility, reduce falls and decrease the use of physical restraints.

Joanne Riehl, Director of Care at the Huronlea Home for the Aged, is pleased that Donna's efforts have increased the staff's morale and skill level. "Donna has been a life-saver to our home. The workload involved in keeping pace with the changes in LTC home administration has been challenging, especially in rural areas, where geography can be a challenge in working with and learning from others. It's reassuring to have a bridge to connect us, provide resources and help navigate the waters," says Joanne.

For more information on implementing Best Practice Guidelines, Donna Scott can be reached at 519-685-4292, extension 42337.

WE'VE UPDATED OUR WEBSITE!

In the coming months, we'll introduce new features that make it easier to stay informed about, and get involved in, activities at the South West LHIN. Let us know what you think by e-mailing us at southwest@lhins.on.ca.

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Appointment to the Board



Linda Stevenson was appointed to the Board of Directors on May 16, 2007. A resident of St. Thomas, Linda is a former trustee of the Thames Valley District School Board and

brings an experienced view of the South West region, its people and their needs.

"I'm excited to begin working as a member of the Board so early in its mandate, as it is still embarking on its mission to improve the way the health care system is experienced by people living in the South West," says Linda.

Visit our website to read the full announcement about Linda's appointment.

Welcoming two new team members



Lisa Johnson, Financial Analyst, joins us from the South West Regional Office of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Lisa brings valuable knowledge from her experience with hospitals, long-term care, and Community Care Access Centres. Her previous role included committee involvement in the development of training materials for the MIS implementation of community mental health and addictions sectors. Lisa looks forward to helping build the LHIN framework for finance and performance measures and is presently working on her Certified General Accountants designation.



Scott Chambers brings to his role as Team Lead – Finance valuable experience from both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Most recently, Scott worked as Manager of Financial Planning and Policy at the City of London. A certified Management Accountant, Scott holds an undergraduate degree from The University of Western Ontario and is a graduate of Western's Master of Public Administration program.