

What's a Senior Friendly Hospital?

Compared to young people, seniors are more at risk to experience a range of adverse events when admitted to hospital -- from higher rates of infection to delirium to loss of capacity for independent living.

We also know that seniors end-up spending more time in hospital compared to younger age groups, accounting for 71% of all patient days in North East LHIN hospitals. (This number is higher than the provincial average of 63% but not that surprising given we have an older population in the North East, with 17% of us in our senior years.)

We owe it to our seniors to make their hospital stays healthy ones that put them back on the path of wellness rather than lead to further declines. That's why the North East LHIN has asked all of its hospitals to complete a Senior Friendly Survey.

Not only have all of our 25 hospitals responded to the survey to examine their practices, but two, Health Sciences North in Sudbury and Blind River District Health Centre, have gone beyond and started putting in place Senior Friendly practices.

"Since seniors are main users of hospitals in our region, our audit of senior friendly hospital care was a great step in the right direction," says Martha Auchinleck, Senior Director with the NE LHIN.

The self-assessment is the first step in the three-year quality improvement strategy aimed at enhancing the care of seniors in hospitals and reducing the risk of their functional decline while in acute care.

Health Sciences North plans to bring a Senior Friendly Hospital recommendation to its Board, said David McNeil, VP of Clinical Program and Chief Nursing Officer. To continuously improve senior friendly care, his hospital will participate in a pilot project that looks at the processes of care for elderly acute care.

At Blind River Hospital, Chief Nursing Officer Mary Ellen Luukkonen explained her hospital is already seeing a slight decrease this year in readmission rates through its use of philosophies for senior friendly care.

"We've focused on using the Home First philosophy, restorative care, and a strong and committed interprofessional team."

Seniors' mobility is one target at Blind River, and Luukkonen says acute care has been borrowing from long-term care's focus on restorative care and rehabilitation. Last month, seven staff were the third group from the hospital to attend a Restorative Care Certificate course.

A senior friendly hospital is one that:

- responds to seniors' physical and mental health needs
- promotes good health
- is safe
- and supports seniors, their families and caregivers to be fully involved in the person's care.

NE LHIN Senior Friendly Hospital Review Findings:

- 70% of hospitals reported strategies to inform and involve older patients and their families in decisions about their care.
- 22% reported having formal education programs in place to address senior friendly care on topics ranging from elder abuse to dementia.
- Physical environment is identified as a barrier to senior friendly hospital care. Hospitals have planned design improvements through renovations.
- Key themes in more than 45 senior-friendly initiatives were improved safety and quality of care, improved patient flow and reduced ALC days, improved ER wait times and utilization, and implementation of senior-friendly strategies.

By spring 2012, the LHINs and hospitals will all adopt at least one indicator to measure improvements to seniors' care as a result of this Strategy.

Learn More:

[*A Summary of Senior Friendly Care in North East LHIN Hospitals*](#), developed in collaboration with North East Specialized Geriatric Services, and the provincial summary report (September 2011), can be read on the NE LHIN website.

Applied Research Education Day

Attention seniors, families and health service providers. A one-day forum is being held in Toronto on November 23 to discuss seniors' community and home care issues. This event is being organized by the Ontario Long-Term Care Association in collaboration with the SHRTN Collaborative, National Initiative for Care of the Elderly, Ontario Association of Residents' Councils, Ontario Long-Term Care Physicians and Health Quality Ontario. OLTCA will waive the registration fees for residents and a companion/caregiver. HQO will cover transportation costs up to \$250 per resident. For more information, http://www.oltca.com/en/events/ared_index.html.



From left to right: Ardith Cull and Denise Courchesne enter Sudbury Outpatient Centre of Health Sciences North.

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