

December 20, 2011

Technology provides care close to home for thousands more Northeastern Ontario patients and families

Meet Colleen and Carrie who share their stories

A cup of scalding tea burns an infant, while in another part of the region a daughter worries about how to help her father through his cancer treatment. These two unrelated but traumatic events were made easier through the use of Telemedicine.

Colleen Harrison's 10-month-old daughter, Abigail, and Carrie Hawkins' 72-year-old father, Morley, are among of the 21,535 people across the region who have recently benefited from this technology.

Over the past year, the North East LHIN's use of Telemedicine has been steadily increasing. The North East is the highest user of the technology amongst Ontario's 14 LHINs, embracing it as a way to improve access to care for Northerners.

This eHealth solution, delivered through the Ontario Telemedicine Network, is ideal for our region's gigantic land mass, aging demographic, scarce health human resources, difficult climate, and often great distances for medical care between communities.

Telemedicine helps to deliver clinical care to patients and distance education for health care professionals, using live, two-way videoconferencing systems and related diagnostic equipment. It is now available in 207 Northeastern Ontario health care locations from Attawapiskat to Wikwemikong (see list at <http://otn.ca/index.php?uri=/en/otn/site-locations/>).

North Bay to Toronto burn consultation

Colleen Harrison of North Bay is singing the praises of telemedicine's role in her baby daughter's recovery from a recent injury.

About a month ago, Abigail pulled herself up to the table and put her hand in a freshly made cup of tea. A doctor at the local hospital wrapped the baby's hand and asked them to come back in five days to have the bandages removed.

Due to the baby's age, her physician was hesitant to remove the dead skin and there was talk of sending her to Sick Kids in Toronto. However, a Toronto doctor was able to see them that same day in North Bay by using telemedicine.

Abigail and her parents were spared the four-hour drive to Toronto and another telemedicine appointment was set to follow the case. At that appointment, North Bay Regional Health Centre staff used a special hand-held camera that could zoom in 50X for the doctor to have a very good look at Abigail's hand and provide instructions to the nurses. One month later, the hand has healed so well that Abigail doesn't have any scarring.

“Telemedicine is a fabulous technology,” said Colleen. “It is very convenient, simple and uninvasive. My daughter was unaware of what was happening and was so relaxed and comfortable that she fell asleep.”

Colleen admits she was anxious initially about the process, but that concern quickly faded.

“Both parties helped to make sure we were comfortable, introduced us to each person, allowed me to talk, ask questions and made sure I understood everything that was said. I was very impressed and thankful for all the attention and help given to both Abigail and myself.”

While there are many great doctors in North Bay, sometimes specialists are needed, who are located many hours away.

“(Telemedicine) allows you to have first rate doctors at your side, whether they are four hours away or on the other side of the world! It is an amazing technology and I would use it again if the need ever arises,” said Colleen.

Ensuring communication in the circle of care

On two occasions, Carrie Hawkins of Elk Lake has been able to have a telemedicine conference about her father’s brain cancer with his oncologist in Sudbury. She works at the Elk Lake Nursing Station where they have been scheduling telemedicine appointments for about one year, but this was her first personal telemedicine experience.

“It saved us all a lot of travelling and time off work,” said Carrie. “I work at the Elk Lake Nursing Station so I was able to just take 15 minutes (a coffee break) out of my busy work schedule, and my brother was able to get away from his work for about half an hour. It saved me from travelling to Englehart to be with my father at the times of the video conferences, and also saved my brother a six-hour drive, as well as two days off work!”

They were able to get information immediately and simultaneously from her father’s doctor, ask questions, and not have to worry about any errors or omissions that might have occurred if otherwise they had to relay information to one another.

“We all thought it was a great experience and look forward to more of these three- or four-way conferences in the up-coming months,” she said.

Stay Informed, Get Involved, Contact Us:



[Find us on Facebook](#)



engagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca



[Follow us on Twitter](#)



Ontario

Local Health Integration
Network
Réseau local d'intégration
des services de santé

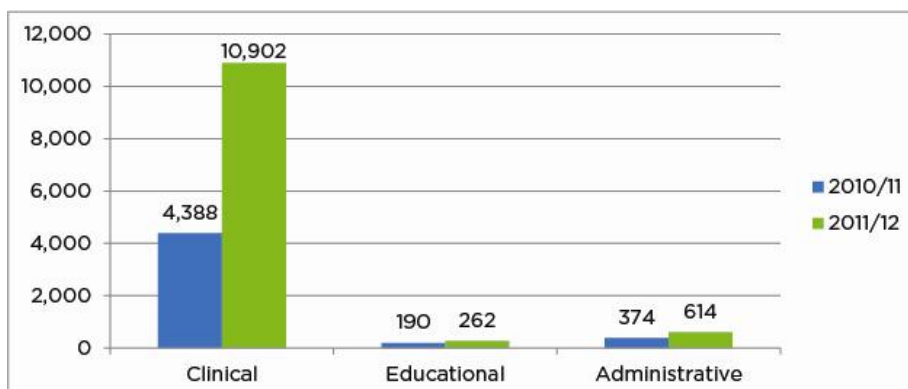


Telemedicine played a major role in Northern baby Abigail's recovery from a recent injury. Read mom, Colleen's, happy story.

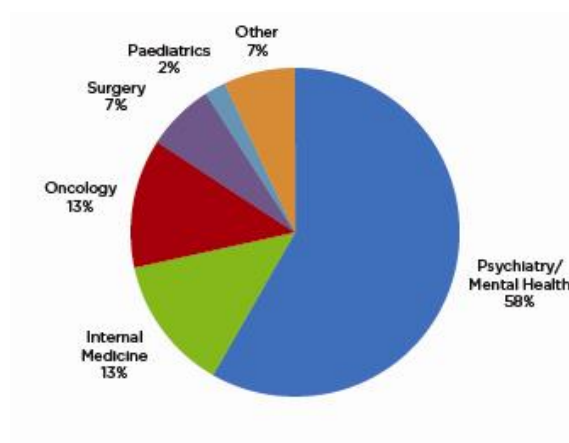


Ontario

Local Health Integration
Network
Réseau local d'intégration
des services de santé



Increasing Use of Telemedicine in the NE LHIN: Q2 2010/11 versus 2011/12 (Credit: Ontario Telemedicine Network)



Top Therapeutic Areas of Telemedicine Care in the NE LHIN: Q2 2011/12 (Credit: Ontario Telemedicine Network)