

### Self-Management Works

**March 1, 2013** – It has been understood for some time that some of the best care that patients with chronic diseases can receive comes from the patients themselves. It is called self-management, and it refers to what a person with a chronic disease does to actively manage his or her own disease.

Basic self-management includes:

- Understanding the disease and its various treatment options;
- Developing a care plan;
- Engaging in activities that protect and promote health; and
- Monitoring symptoms.

Since 2010, the North West CCAC, in collaboration with St. Joseph’s Care Group, has offered the *Healthy Change* program to help people in Northwestern Ontario develop the skills, ability and confidence to better manage their chronic conditions.

“Basically, our goal is to help people become informed, active participants in their own health care,” said Charlene Snow, the Chronic Disease Self-Management Training Supervisor at the CCAC. “This is key if they want to minimize or reduce the effects of their disease, and slow or even prevent its progression.”

*Healthy Change*, which is based on a chronic disease care self-management system developed by Stanford University, is a six-week program for people with conditions like diabetes, lupus, heart disease, arthritis, lung disease such as COPD, depression, fibromyalgia, colitis and other chronic health issues.

The workshop is led by two specially trained “peer leaders” – volunteers or health care professionals – many of whom have chronic conditions themselves. Participants take an active role in the workshop. They set individual goals each week, work to accomplish their goals over the course of the following week, and then share their goals and progress with the group.

The program helps approximately 300 patients per year, and is offered in 18 communities across the Northwest. It grew out of an initiative begun in 2008 by the North West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), which then turned responsibility over for the program to the CCAC.

“I have to say that the people in this region are lucky to have a LHIN with the foresight and commitment to start something like this,” Snow said.

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**Healthy Change**  
...by the numbers

**6**  
*Healthy Change* is a six-week program for people with chronic conditions.

**18**  
The number of communities in the region where the program is offered.

**300**  
The number of patients helped each year.

**2008**  
When the program first began, initiated by the North West LHIN.

**2010**  
The year the North West CCAC, in collaboration with St. Joseph’s Care Group, started offering *Healthy Change*.

*Healthy Change* is a two-pillar program. In addition to offering patient support, it offers training to health professionals who want to learn how to help patients better manage their disease. Sheri McMenemy, a mental therapist with the Dryden Area Family Health Team, is one of 550 providers who have taken the program.

“I truly enjoyed the session,” McMenemy said. “I have used the Brief Action Planning tool with my clients every day since the workshop, with great success! It’s empowering for them to see that it’s the achievable baby steps that make all the difference.”

### LHIN Facts

Enhancing chronic disease prevention and management is one of the four priority areas identified by the North West LHIN in its recently released *Integrated Health Services Plan 2013-2016*.

North West LHIN CEO Laura Kokocinski called *Healthy Change* a great example of transformational care – putting patients at the centre, and in charge of their health care journey.

“We are working very hard to shift our focus from acute care, emergency response to community-based, patient-centred health promotion,” Kokocinski said. “By providing people with the tools and confidence they need to stay healthy longer, we are giving them a better quality of life, reducing the strain on our hospitals, and ensuring that our health care system can remain sustainable for generations to come.”