

The NorWest Community Health Centres' Diabetes Mobile Unit: Bringing Care Closer to Home

July 25, 2012 – In the North West LHIN, 25% of individuals over age 65 have diabetes compared to 20% provincially, and we have two times the rate of admission to hospital for individuals who have diabetes compared to the provincial average.

In 2010, the North West LHIN identified the need for an innovative strategy to support the provision of diabetes care to residents in remote and rural communities and worked with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish the NorWest Community Health Centres' (CHC) Diabetes Mobile Unit through the Ontario Diabetes Strategy. The Diabetes Mobile Unit meets the needs of people in rural communities with, or at risk of developing diabetes.

The LHIN-funded Diabetes Mobile Unit, staffed with a Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse and Community Health Worker, provides service every four weeks to the following nine communities: Armstrong, Whitesand First Nation, Gull Bay First Nation, Lake Helen First Nation, Rocky Bay First Nation, Pays Plat First Nation, as well as Kaministiquia, Nolalu and Upsala.

Since the project was initiated 20 months ago, the Diabetes Mobile Unit has:

- Made 179 community visits, with each community receiving between 19 and 24 visits;
- Booked and completed 941 appointments with a Nurse Practitioner;
- Completed 955 foot care appointments;
- Held prevention and awareness activities with 259 clients; and
- Performed individual health teaching with all clients seen by the Nurse Practitioner and Foot Care Nurse.

A Client's Story

Kathy Gustafson of Whitesand First Nation credits the Diabetes Mobile Unit with helping her understand how to eat properly, watch her cholesterol intake, monitor her blood sugar and manage the sugar if it is too high or too low. She also values the foot care service provided to her. By seeing Nathalie (the Foot Care Nurse), Kathy states her nails have now almost completely healed. Without the convenience of the Diabetes Mobile Unit delivering care in Armstrong, Gustafson feels that her blood sugars would not be under control like they are now and her feet would be in bad shape. "It's inconvenient to travel to Thunder Bay," she says. "If the Mobile Unit wasn't available, I'd be cancelling more appointments."

Value-Add

The NorWest CHC's Diabetes Mobile Unit is doing amazing work! Participating clients Hgb A1C rates have improved. These rates indicate blood glucose levels over a sustained period of time and the test is one of the evidence-based laboratory tests used in diabetes management. In addition, recent survey results indicate that clients:

- Are very satisfied with the Diabetes Mobile Unit's services;
- Have an increased understanding of diabetes and increased confidence in managing their self-care;
- Have an increased personal readiness for change;
- Have noticed an improvement in the health of their feet; and
- See a health care professional on a regular basis.

The Diabetes Mobile Unit clearly demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of delivering evidence-based, quality care, closer to home.