
North West LHIN – November 22, 2010

Increasing Access to Diabetes Care for Rural and Remote Communities

To inform planning for the implementation of the Ontario Diabetes Strategy, the North West LHIN conducted extensive community engagement and analysis of data. A prevalent theme arising from this work was the need for continuity of diabetes care in more isolated settings. As travel to larger centres for care is not a viable option for many people with diabetes, the need for local access to care was identified.

A mobile pilot project to increase access to diabetes care in the North West LHIN has been funded through the Ontario Diabetes Strategy. Managed by the NorWest Community Health Centres, it is anticipated this mobile service will improve the quality of life for people with diabetes and for those at risk and, in so doing, will reduce preventable emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

This initiative, started in June of 2010, serves eight communities around Thunder Bay: Armstrong, Whitesand First Nation, Gull Bay First Nation, Lake Helen First Nation, Rocky Bay First Nation, Pays Plat First Nation, Kaministiquia, Upsala and Nolalu.

The main objective of this mobile pilot project is to provide diabetes education and promote self management through a multidisciplinary approach. Proper nutrition and monitoring of blood glucose levels, attention to lifestyle activities and general health issues are addressed through the initiative. Both providers and individuals are involved in each client's diabetes care to support commitment to prescribed protocols.

Clients seen fall into one of three groups:

- at risk of diabetes
- already diagnosed with diabetes; or
- diabetic with complications and end stage organ damage

From August 1 to September 24, 2010, the NorWest CHC's mobile visited all eight communities and reports the following activity:

- 14 of the clients seen were diagnosed at risk
- 45 of the clients seen were already diagnosed
- 5 of the clients seen were diabetics with complications
- 55 health assessments were completed
- 99 health promotion information packages were provided to clients
- 12 children received health promotion
- 14 clients were recruited for a mobile ophthalmology program to be offered in their communities in November.

It is estimated that this program will serve 200 clients. The pilot project will run through to October of 2011.