

February 19, 2014

From Hospital to Home: Pilot Project Helps Bluewater Health Patients Understand Their Health Care Options

For seniors who are being treated at a hospital, going home is always the first option when planning for their ongoing care. Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) care coordinators strive to ensure that seniors and their family are provided with the best information available, including those times when home may not be the best option. To help with making an informed decision, a new pilot project at Bluewater Health is bringing hands-on video information about local long-term care homes directly to seniors who have been assessed as eligible for long-term care and are unable to personally visit the homes. Thanks to a partnership between the Erie St. Clair LHIN, Bluewater Health, and the CCAC, seniors and their families can now access portable tablets pre-loaded with video tours of Sarnia/Lambton long-term care homes.

CCAC care coordinators at Bluewater Health have three pilot tablets that are being used to show the videos to patients and families. While helping seniors return home from a hospital stay is always the preferred option, there are times when this is not possible. For these people, having tablets with video tours is one step in helping them make informed decisions about the future of their care. Being portable, there is an opportunity for the tablets to be used in any of the clinical units at either Bluewater Health in Sarnia or CEEH of Bluewater Health in Petrolia.

"It was difficult for me to go and see the long term care homes. Seeing the facilities virtually helped me narrow down my choices and I knew what to expect before I move to one of the homes." - Susan Steele, patient at Bluewater Health



Susan Steele (left) and Social Worker Tracy Byrne, using a tablet to view local long-term care facilities



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“While we recognize that home is always the first choice for our seniors, planning for long-term care is a big life decision. The tablets have generated a great deal of excitement among our providers and increases access to more information for our residents.” said Gary Switzer, CEO, of the ESC LHIN.

Feedback from both patients and staff has been positive with many commenting that the tablets are very useful in helping them understand what each long-term care home has to offer. In several instances, staff have shown seniors and their family members new options that they had not initially considered.

The idea for the videos and the tablets was drawn from recommendations in a 2012 report titled *Improving Care for Seniors in Chatham-Kent and Sarnia/Lambton: Understanding Alternate Level of Care Designations*. Following the report, the CCAC launched a series of online videos that provided a virtual tour through the local long-term care homes. The videos, which are available online at www.eriestclairhealthline.ca, are the same as those now being used in the tablet pilot project.

“Each of us would want to participate to the best of our ability in choosing our future home. If our original place of residence is no longer possible due to our changing health care needs, these virtual tours of long term care options in our community can help in decision making.” said Lynda Robinson, VP Operations, from Bluewater Health

Alternate Level of Care, or ALC, is a term used most commonly in hospitals for people who, while they are receiving care, would best be served in a different setting. Hospitals exist to deliver short-term treatment for urgent medical conditions, severe injuries or illnesses, or recovery from surgery. Long-term needs are best addressed at home with the proper supports, or in long-term care facilities.

The tablet pilot project is being tested over the course of the next year. The partnership will evaluate feedback from both staff and patients and their families to understand successes and where there is room to improve. So far, the tablets are helping to virtually transport patients to long-term care homes they may not have been otherwise able to experience.



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LEARN MORE

Long-term care home wait time data is accessible on the Erie St. Clair CCAC website – www.esc.ccac-ont.ca (under the “Long-Term Care Options” tab) – in three separate documents; one for Windsor and Essex County, one for Chatham-Kent, and one for Sarnia and Lambton County.

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For more information about the Erie St. Clair LHIN, please visit: www.eriestclairhin.on.ca

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ABOUT THE ESC LHIN

The Erie St. Clair LHIN is a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care agency that plans and pays for health care services totalling a billion dollars a year in our region alone – everything from hospitals to Meals on Wheels.

The Erie St. Clair LHIN strives to make the health care system better by understanding and responding to local needs and by getting services to work together more efficiently. That’s how we’ll all get better health care, while saving money and making the system sustainable for our children and grandchildren.



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