

July 13, 2011

COMMUNITY AND LHIN COME TOGETHER TO KEEP ED OPEN

When Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital (CEEH) in Petrolia was having issues staffing its 24/7 rural Emergency Department (ED), the local physicians proposed a reduction in service hours to relieve the pressure and burnout they were facing. The community did not support this proposal and wanted to keep their ED at all costs. Although the ESC LHIN saw this as an immediate issue, it was also seen as an opportunity to work with the community to find the solution and formed the CEEH Reference Panel to do this.

The Reference Panel was a committee of community members, hospital staff, local and regional ED physicians, local EMS and LHIN staff who worked over the next 12 months to explore all options to keep the ED open 24/7. Community engagement was conducted online, in person, in town hall meetings, through household mailers and even in a community suggestion box in order to find solutions to this issue. Through their work, the panel provided the ESC LHIN with recommendations, focused on immediate solutions and options supporting the long-term sustainability of the ED.

As a result, the ED in Petrolia continues to operate 24/7 with the assistance of HealthForceOntario, locum doctors and physician support from Bluewater Health. The community banded together to ramp up its recruitment of physicians, marketing Petrolia as a welcoming place to work and live. Most importantly, the local physicians were able to restore some work-life balance, continuing their work in the ED, family practices, and caring for seniors in local long-term care homes.

Petrolia now sees a future as a rural health care centre of excellence and has already established a partnership with the Schulich's School of Medicine and Dentistry Residence program to expose new physicians to rural medicine and culture.

"It is also important to underscore the principle of "working together" to find solutions and to remind ourselves that while we all have much to be cynical about when it comes to the delivery of health care, this is a stellar example of how coming together to tackle a problem can result in a positive outcome."

"Our doctors, the members of the Erie St. Clair LHIN Reference panel, communities across the county, and the LHIN board and its staff are to be commended for their commitment to the health of Petrolia and Lambton County residents and for their belief that where there is a problem, there is a solution. We have no doubt that Petrolia and Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital will be a model for rural health care and rural health care education. This is only the beginning..." *Mary-Pat Gleeson and Rosanne Orcutt. Reference Panel's Hard Work Pays Off. Sarnia Observer, 2011-07-04, A6.*

[Click here to read more.](#)