



Every edition of Community Care Connection reminds me how quickly time passes and how much VHA has accomplished within that snippet of time. As we move towards a more inclusive look at all aspects of our business through our Client Voices Committee, reach milestones on our Best Practice Spotlight Organization® (BPSO) journey, and help clients who get out and about to receive care at Central CCAC's new Fairview Clinic, it's clear: VHA is an organization that "moves" in many ways.

That was especially apparent this past summer when we quickly *got moving* to respond to the Ontario Government's reform of publicly funded physiotherapy services. While the changes seemed lightning fast, they definitely serve to keep us nimble! We have worked closely with all our CCAC partners to ensure seniors and other eligible patients have access to the physiotherapy services they need to help them recover from illness, surgery or injury and stay active, healthy, and independent.

From our unique approach to peer mentoring support in our Personal Support Coaching Pilot, to implementation of wound-care charting technology at point-of-care for Chatham nurses, to our Mobility Pilot for Personal Support Workers, we're also moving forward with a number of innovative pilots. Though some of these pilots include the use of "high-tech" devices, our goal is to empower our staff and service providers with skills, support and tools that enhance

care, communication and ultimately create possibilities for more independence.

Most evident, is how the work we do can be so moving—even life-changing—for staff, volunteers, clients and their families. Case in point: the incredibly heart-felt letter we received from Beverly Douthwright, a long-serving volunteer with our **Parent Relief Volunteer Program**. It's a compelling, inspiring account of her work with this important program, funded in part by the United Way. It's also well-timed, with United Way's fall fundraising campaign in high gear. If you haven't already, I encourage you to support this incredible organization! United Way funding is crucial to many of VHA's essential community support programs—programs that focus on the most vulnerable populations. These often start as bleak stories of hardship and isolation. But, with help and the right supports, the tale can take a dramatic twist, allowing clients to rediscover something they thought they had lost long ago: hope.

Nurses Pilot Wound Care Technology

VHA Chatham nurses are participating in an exciting pilot with Picalere's electronic tool that uses a tablet or laptop to chart wounds online at the point of care. Nurses can also share photos online with the wound care specialist. The pilot aims to:

- Enhance point-of-care documentation.
- Enhance communication.
- Ensure best practices and BPSO requirements.
- Improve CCAC documentation.

- Improve efficiencies.
- Enhance treatment using thorough documentation of supplies and pictures of progress.
- Provide nurses access to wound care resources at the point of care.

The pilot will be evaluated in November and we look forward to sharing results!

The Power of Three Hours—A Volunteer’s Story



Beverly Douthwright

A number of years ago, I decided to do something that would make a difference after I came across an ad in the local newspaper for VHA Home HealthCare’s (VHA) Parent Relief Volunteer Program (PRVP). I thought it would be a great fit as I am a teacher and love working with kids. I signed up and have never regretted it! I thought it would be great to assist families who needed support but never realized what a blessing they would be to me until I experienced it firsthand.

It seems to be such a simple thing to be able to spend just three hours a week playing with kids, talking with moms, providing basic life advice and a bit of encouragement to families who just need to feel and believe that someone cares. Families who are feeling alone and a bit overwhelmed with their present life circumstances. What I didn’t realize was just what a difference these three hours can really make in their lives.

The last family I worked with – a single immigrant mom with two boys (aged six months and three) told me she and her boys eagerly await my Saturday morning visit. They meet me at the door with big smiles each week – the oldest boy loves to look in my bag to see what toys I have brought and the mom looks forward to having someone to bounce ideas off of and to ask questions about her kids as her family all live very far away. She sometimes doesn’t feel she understands exactly how things work in Canada. One week, I helped the boys show their appreciation with a Mother’s Day surprise. Another week I babysat while mom got out for a few hours alone.

Since I began volunteering with this VHA program I’ve worked with many delightful families including: three with twins, all who needed some relief so the parent(s) could enjoy a few moments to themselves; a single parent family with three kids under the age of four and most recently the single mom of two boys that I mentioned. In several cases the moms were suffering postpartum depression, exhaustion and loneliness either because they had no support here in Canada, or because their husbands worked 24/7 just to make ends meet.

The family that most sticks out in my memory, is one I worked with last year—a newly bereaved husband of two sweet girls, who lost his wife just after the

birth of his youngest daughter. This young immigrant father was doing his best to mask his grief and make things “okay” for his seven-year-old daughter while trying to single-handedly care for his three-month-old colicky baby girl. The family lived in the basement of his in-laws’ home and he was also caring for his ailing mother-in-law. *Wow* was all I could think. It made my own concerns seem so very petty in comparison – this man needed HELP!

I spent the better part of four months with the older girl helping her work through the grief of her mom’s death through play, love and attention. My visits allowed the dad time to run errands without the kids. My heart broke for him one week when he told me about

a trip to the grocery store with the baby. He had a cart full of groceries when he realized the baby’s diaper really needed changing. Because the men’s washroom had no change table, he went to the ladies bathroom where



PRVP is a win-win for volunteers and families alike.

a woman told him to “get his wife” to change the baby. He was so overwhelmed he picked up the baby, left the store and his cartful of groceries behind, and went home.

Three hours a week seems such a small sacrifice to help someone who so needs and is so appreciative of any and all help I can provide. Feelings of loneliness, depression, stress and anxiety are the underlying feelings in many of these homes. In these families a three-hour visit each week by a VHA parent relief volunteer can be a bright ray of sunshine and hope.

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Just three hours a week makes a huge difference in the lives of families at risk.

programs, etc. The families are usually very receptive to learning new ways to help their children grow up happy and healthy.

I hope this gives you some idea of what a VHA parent relief volunteer does. It is so hard to describe much of what I have been doing. I try to teach the moms (or dads) through modelling – modelling ways to play, encourage and discipline their kids, feed their babies, find community support

I have volunteered with VHA for a number of years and hope to continue for many years to come. I look forward to meeting my new family soon. I will assist a father of four—with a newborn and three children under the age of four (the oldest is autistic)—whose wife recently died. I cannot imagine how this man is coping.

Each week of volunteering brings new and exciting adventures. I encourage all I meet to volunteer with this great program. I only wish it ran in more areas of Toronto – the need is so great and the workers too few!

Beverly Douthwright
VHA Parent Relief Volunteer

Client Benefits of Community Clinic

Christopher Gray thought he was on the mend after a 10,000 BTU air conditioner dropped from a second story window and slashed open his leg. But Christopher's condition started to deteriorate once the large scab over the wound fell off and a staph infection developed. The fact that Christopher also has Type 1 diabetes made doctors even more concerned and he was once again admitted to hospital. Once Christopher's condition stabilized, he was referred to the Fairview Clinic for follow-up wound care. "Without the nurses and VHA there's no way I could get better as fast as I have to go back to my regular duties and start work."

For clients well enough to leave their home, the visits to a community clinic offer some unexpected benefits. It not only gives clients a greater sense of control over scheduling appointments, but also encourages them to get out and about in their community.

The Fairview clinic—which is fully staffed by VHA nurses—is one of six serving the Central Community Care Access Centre area and offers a variety of services including: post-surgical care, injections, IV therapy and wound care.

"It gives our clients choice. It gives them control," says VHA President and CEO, Carol Annett who was on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony. "It lets them set how they're going to get better, when and where—*their* timing—I think that's critical. And it allows folks to get better and faster to get on with their lives."

For more information on Central CCAC's community clinics visit www.centralhealthline.ca.

To watch videos from the clinic opening visit <http://bit.ly/HKZVv3>



Left to right: Carol Annett, Christopher Gray and Judy Breckles cut ribbon at Fairview Clinic opening.

Moving Others to Share

In September VHA began piloting a new Personal Support (PS) coaching model in the Toronto Central region. The model—which creates an intermediate “coaching” role that gives seasoned Personal Support Workers (PSWs) the chance to mentor their peers—is the first of its kind, evolving out of research and practice reviews from other existing personal support community models.

The Piloted Model

VHA’s existing PS structure has teams of up to 60 PSWs directly reporting to one Personal Support Supervisor. The pilot places four veteran PSWs, specially trained for this coaching role, between the PS Care Team Supervisor and the PSW team. Coaches were selected based on experience and their superior performance as a PSW and function as an intermediary—answering PSW questions, providing support and guidance. If the Coach encounters an issue outside the scope of the role, they immediately direct it to the Care Team Supervisor.

“The pilot provides a great opportunity for peer-to-peer support and mentorship,” says pilot lead and Toronto Central Regional Manager, Andrea David. “It’s also a way for VHA to acknowledge and reward PSWs who demonstrate an exceptional work ethic and skills.”

“PSWs are very comfortable speaking about their problems knowing they will not be judged,” says Felister Mburu, one of the pilot’s PSW Coaches. “I am a PSW just like them and we can solve their problems together.” She noted that client complaints have dropped considerably which “speaks volumes.”

Pilot PS supervisor, Zedrick Laure echoes Felister’s thoughts and adds: “I believe this will provide better service for clients and greater satisfaction for our workers by reassuring them they are not alone out in the community.”

Anecdotal evidence thus far is positive, however, we’re looking forward to evaluating the success of the pilot and planning our next steps from there.



Information on the Go for PSWs

After lots of preparation and much anticipation, VHA kicked off its **Mobility Plus** pilot with 20 Personal Support Workers (PSWs) from two central teams in August. Mobility

Plus lets our staff *confirm visits, access client information* and *view client schedules* on the move. It also enhances communication between our field and office staff and documentation of client preferences.

Results show the pilot reduced client complaints, calls between the office and staff, administrative time on unconfirmed visits and improved missed visit performance.

Service Coordinators noted they can now follow up on unconfirmed visits immediately and because of email technology, are communicating with their staff more effectively. Focus groups revealed that PSWs:

- Feel more informed about their clients and schedule.
- Receive a faster response from their supervisor and the office.
- Are happy they don’t need to use their client’s phone to confirm visits.
- Love using the device.
- Find access to client diagnosis, preferences and their address on their phone helpful.

The pilot also gave us helpful feedback on improving the training process for our staff. Our Mobility Plus project team is reviewing recommendations to better support staff and improve the quality of client care as we look to roll the project out to all PSW teams in the first quarter of 2014.



Eye on Quality

Incorporating the Client Voice—A Game Changer!

“... there is simply no better way to ensure that the patient perspective is reflected in your work than to include them, listen to their input and respect their unique contributions.” (MacLeod and Kushner, 2013)

This fall, VHA's *Client Voice Task Group* held our first two meetings with clients and family members. We've seen an incredible amount of enthusiasm and generosity from the clients and family members who volunteered to “ready” our organization for incorporating the client voice more extensively. Six people took time to work with us and are passionate about helping improve the quality of our services. The committee really started to gel in the second meeting and in only two hours, produced many ‘ah-ha’ ideas and questions that will help VHA improve the client experience with our services. Without their incredible insights, these fresh ideas may not have been unearthed. And this is just the beginning! Enthusiasm is high and the momentum generated by these early gains will undoubtedly propel us forward.

Public Reporting of VHA Quality Results

The quality of our work is everybody's business! The CCACs monitor the quality of care VHA delivers to clients and soon the general public can too. Health Quality Ontario (HQO), an arms-length agency established by the Ontario Government, has a mandate to report on the quality of the health care system to the public. HQO reports include the home care sector overall and the CCACs more specifically. Starting in spring of 2014, performance information about CCAC's contracted home health care service provider agencies, including VHA, will be available on their website www.hqontario.ca.

VHA recently posted performance results at www.vha.ca/client-survey-results. Results will be updated regularly and Community Support Program information will soon be added. Through our Client Voice initiative, we'll also be asking our clients and families about what information they'd like to see posted about VHA's performance.

BPSO® Update



Since VHA's selection as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) candidate by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, we've been diligently working towards the implementation stage—and it's finally arrived! The initial rollout focus is on three of five selected Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs): *Client-Centred Care*; *Assessment and Management of Stage I – IV Pressure Ulcers*; and *Prevention of Falls and Fall Injuries in the Older Adult*.

Our Client-Centred Care team developed an interactive training workshop that is now rolling out to all VHA personal support workers (PSWs) and is set for rehab and nursing implementation in 2014.

Assessment and Management of Stage I – IV Pressure Ulcers and Prevention of Falls and Fall Injuries in the Older Adult BPG project teams plan to fully roll out these BPGs across all disciplines in the new year after great feedback from summer pilot projects.

We're also in the “spotlight” sharing our findings with others and recently presented on wound management and pressure ulcers at Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists' Conference and at the Canadian Home Care Summit to rave reviews.

One project team will lead the final two BPGs: *Assessment and Management of Pain and End of Life Care in the Last Days and Hours* since managing pain is a critical part of palliative care. The team is in the process of selecting recommendations and plans to begin piloting these in January of 2014.

Though we're still only half way through our journey, early results show that delivering care based on Best Practice Guidelines results in better client outcomes, quality of care and overall client satisfaction.



Creating More Independence

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A DIVISION OF VHA HOME HEALTHCARE



VHA Home HealthCare has no corporate or other affiliation with VHA Health & Home Support, also known as VHA Ottawa. VHA Health & Home Support can be reached through their website at www.vhaottawa.ca.



United Way
Member Agency



Visit our website at www.vha.ca

All of our services are available at home, school, in hospital or a long-term care facility.

VHA PROVIDES:

- Adult and elder care
- Child and family care
- Respite or caregiver/family relief
- Palliative care
- Mental health support
- Foot care
- Attendant care
- Extreme cleaning
- Information and referral services
- Supplementary staffing in care facilities
- Supportive housing
- Consultation and education

VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF/ SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Dietitians
- Occupational Therapists
- Personal Support Workers/Homemakers
- Physiotherapists
- Registered Nurses/Registered Practical Nurses/Nurse Practitioners
- Social Workers
- Rehab Assistants
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Client Service Coordinators/Supervisors

VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of United Way Toronto and a contracted provider with Toronto Central, Central, Central East, Central West, South West, Mississauga Halton, Champlain, and Erie St. Clair CCACs, the City of Toronto's Homemakers and Nurses Services program and the Regional Municipality of Durham.

We welcome your support!

Membership

VHA welcomes new associate members and encourages people in the community to get involved with VHA. Our membership fee of \$25 can be waived in special circumstances. Please contact Patricia Triantafilou at 416.489.2500 or patricia@vha.ca.

Donation

Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need. Donations are welcome online, by mail, phone or in person. Our sincerest thanks for your generosity.

Comments or Suggestions? Contact the editor of Community Care Connection

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