



Complex care, Simple comforts

COMMUNITY Care connection

REACHING OUT, REACHING BEYOND

Undoubtedly, 2009 was one of VHA's most exciting years in its 84-year history. The most noticeable change is the "new addition" to the VHA family. In May, VHA announced that COTA Health's rehabilitation team would join our organization. The integration (which took place at the start of July 2009) and creation of VHA Rehab Solutions has brought an additional 450 staff and service providers to us, expanding our service offerings to include dietetics, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, social work services and speech-language pathology.

While this certainly makes us a stronger organization and broadens our reach from five to eight CCAC regions, it also provides more seamless care to our clients. This was the driving force behind the integration, and we look forward to meshing this new basket of services with our existing supports as a way to enhance and improve our clients' experience with VHA.

This edition also highlights Rehab's internal review of programs and

responsiveness to client needs in paediatric complex feeding. As this story illustrates, even seemingly small steps and knowledge transfer improvements can have a huge impact on the children and families we support.

In early June, a full house was on hand to not only attend our Annual General Meeting, but also to witness our third annual *Heroes in the Home Award* presentation. There wasn't a dry eye in the house! The stories of both Tahir Qureshi and Rosa Spizziri—detailed in this edition—are nothing short of inspirational. Their perseverance, determination and devotion validate the importance of home health care in Ontario. Care that not only meets the needs of the patients we serve, but also the caregivers who support them: they are truly the glue that holds it all together.

The fall had us running on "Qmentum momentum" as we worked diligently towards our fourth re-accreditation. Accreditation Canada's new Qmentum survey process was a major departure from previous surveys. The process was a

rigorous one that set very high standards indeed. Fortunately, VHA was up for the challenge and met all applicable quality dimensions and required organizational practices. Obviously no organization is perfect. But as the surveyors astutely pointed out, every area identified as a "challenge" for VHA is, in fact, an area where there is a real opportunity for growth within our organization.

While the accreditation process may be over for another three years, we will continue the great work we're doing and seize on opportunities that allow us to do better, aim higher and enhance our clients' experience with VHA.



Carol Annett
CEO & President,
VHA Home HealthCare

in this issue



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Welcome
VHA Rehab Solutions
A DIVISION OF VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

VHA HONOURS HEROES IN THE HOME



Going Above & Beyond

Every year, VHA Home HealthCare's *Heroes in the Home Award* recognizes the enormous dedication of a friend or family member who has gone above and beyond to provide a loved one who is disabled, elderly or chronically ill with the necessary support to remain at home. This award is really a small way for VHA to say "thank you" to these extraordinary people and to bring attention to the need for caregiver support and relief.

This year we honoured two truly heroic people—Tahir Qureshi of Scarborough and Rosa Spizzirri of Etobicoke—who both embody the dedication of caregivers everywhere. "The love, compassion and strength both Tahir and Rosa demonstrate on a daily basis is nothing short of incredible," notes President and CEO of VHA, Carol Annett.

Love at first sight. That's clearly what Tahir Qureshi felt the moment he met Tahira in their native Pakistan. Despite Tahir's declaration, Tahira's parents were skeptical. Diagnosed with an untreatable form of muscular dystrophy, Tahira's deteriorating health was no secret and they worried that this young suitor didn't fully understand the responsibility he would eventually have to take on. But Tahir never wavered in his devotion and finally convinced his future in-laws that he would be there for Tahira in sickness and in health. After marrying in 1997 and moving to Canada two days later, Tahir not only became Tahira's husband, but her caregiver as well.



(L to R) Tahir, Iqbal, Alia, Tahira and Anam Qureshi



Carol Annett, VHA President and CEO presents Tahir Qureshi with Heroes Award

Unfortunately, since then Tahira's muscular dystrophy has progressed. Despite the exhausting demands of caring for a young family, Tahir still has plenty of energy to emotionally and physically support his wife. "He does every single thing to help me," says Tahira. "I can't move my arms or legs and he's there every day for me and our children."

Tahir refuses to allow his wife to use a bedpan or bed lift and instead carries her from her wheelchair into bed or to the bathroom. He also cooks, cleans and cares for their three energetic children. "When you see my children you know that their father is a good cook," Tahira proudly boasts, referring to their kids' chubby cheeks and radiant skin.

Essentially, for 22 hours a day, Tahir is on call as a caregiver to his wife and children: the only support they receive is one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening from a VHA personal support worker (PSW), funded by Central East Community Care Access Centre (CCAC).

Remarkably, until winning this award, Tahir did not think anything of the never-ending tasks and care he performs daily: "You [VHA] have made me realize I've done something," he says. His kids and wife were ecstatic over his win, clapping and cheering in

the background when VHA made the call to inform Tahir he'd won. "I hope that Mr. Qureshi's good deeds can be seen and appreciated by a lot of people and inspire them to never give up when life is challenging," says Elizabeth Peralta, VHA Field Educator who nominated Tahir for the award.

Asked if the weight of all the responsibility ever gets to be too much, Tahir answers unequivocally: "If I were reborn again I would marry her [Tahira]. That is my decision. We are so happy in our lives."



(L to R) Joy Klopp, VHA Director, Rosa Spizzirri, and Jennifer Kiyonaga, Manager of Community Care at CANES

Rosa Spizzirri, the other Heroes in the Home Award winner, has an equally challenging and inspiring story. She was nominated for the award by CANES Community Manager, Jennifer Kiyonaga, whose organization provides a PSW funded by Central West CCAC.

For nine years, Rosa provided around the clock care for her bedridden father until he passed away in early 2009 at 94. While nine years of care giving day in and day out had its challenges, Rosa never second-guessed her decision to care for her dad. "I never regretted anything I did for my father. Not for one minute," noted Rosa moments before receiving the award.

Though deeply saddened by the loss of her father, Rosa remains focused on care giving. She continues to look after her 45-year-old son who has a mental disability, as well as her husband and daughter—both of whom are battling cancer. Despite all these hardships, Rosa manages to remain upbeat and positive. "Her home is a place of warmth, love and laughter... and is extended to all who enter her home. Rosa's commitment to her family is unmatched," says Jennifer Kiyonaga.

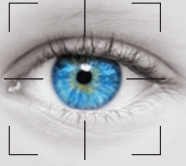
Tahir and Rosa are **extraordinary** people that have only ever viewed what they do as ordinary. They both say that caring for the people they love is what's in their heart. Our heroes, Tahir and Rosa, represent the incredible dedication and love that is required of a caregiver and we hope that this award will continue to shed light on the enormous role they play within their families and in our society.



Now Accepting 2010 Nominations

In spring 2010, VHA will again award a non-professional caregiver who has shown compassion and made personal sacrifices to provide daily care for a loved one.

Nominations are welcome until April 30, 2010. Caregivers must reside in Ontario. To nominate a caregiver you know, please visit our website at www.vha.ca and click on **Heroes in the Home**, or send your nomination to Joy Klopp at jklopp@vha.ca or to VHA's Mount Pleasant office. For more information contact Joy at 416.482.8782



EYE ON QUALITY

Qmentum Momentum: VHA Earns Its Fourth Accreditation!



We're delighted to announce that VHA has once again earned full accreditation status from Accreditation Canada (*formerly known as the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation*). The surveyors were on site from November 29 until December 2, 2009 to assess how well VHA meets national standards of excellence in quality and safety of home care services, organizational leadership, governance, and worklife.

VHA's hard work, preparation and ongoing efforts to continually improve our services helped us meet all of the 400+ criteria. Even more exciting was the extremely positive feedback provided by the surveyors during the debrief. They highlighted our successes and strengths

including VHA's:

- Well-established patient safety culture
- Client-centric approach across the organization from leadership to the frontline staff
- Consistently high continuity of care levels
- Creativity in programming to respond to community needs and collaboration with community partners
- Strong and well-aligned strategic, operational and department plans
- Skilled, dedicated and involved Board
- Multitude of recent technological advancements
- High praise from clients

The surveyors were particularly impressed with VHA's ethics

framework, its internalization amongst staff and the Board, and VHA's active role in the Community Ethics Network. In fact, VHA's involvement in the Community Ethics Network has been put forth as a leading practice in the field.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we're going to start resting on our laurels (though some may be taking a well-earned post accreditation break)! While we met 100 per cent of criteria and required organizational practices, there are still plenty of areas where exciting developments, improvements and chances to grow are on the horizon. Our surveyors provided many great ideas to raise the bar at VHA and we plan on pursuing them over the next three years and beyond.

*Comments
or Suggestions?*

Contact the editor of

COMMUNITY
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We Welcome Your Support

MEMBERSHIP

VHA welcomes new associate members and encourages people of the communities we serve to get involved in the life of our organization. Members will receive ongoing information about our activities and issues relevant to the home care sector, as well as be invited to attend the annual general meeting. There is a membership fee of \$25.00 (which can be waived in special circumstances). For more information, please contact Patricia Triantafilou at 416.482.4617 or patricia@vha.ca

DONATIONS

Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need of care and support in your community. Donations are welcome online (at www.vha.ca), by mail, over the phone (credit card contributions) or in person. You may also want to make a "tribute gift" in honour of a loved one. To our donors: our sincerest thanks for your generosity.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Complex Paediatric Feeding in the Community

Many new parents experience anxiety around feeding their newborn or young child. They worry their child isn't getting enough to eat, or isn't eating a balanced diet. But for infants and young children with complex feeding issues, the matter can literally be life and death.

Early hospital discharge for infants and young children can help paediatric patients enjoy the comforts of home sooner and significantly reduce health care costs without negative consequences. The transition, however, can be stressful or even frightening for parents who've grown accustomed to being surrounded by 24/7 hospital supports and monitoring of their child's condition—including risks associated with complex feeding issues such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and aspiration. Because of this, support services provided by home health professionals to assist with complex feeding concerns, in collaboration with family members and other medical team members, are integral to a successful transition and the child's long-term treatment.

Such was the case for Jonathan, now three, who was born with a heart defect and a large omphalocele—a condition where a baby's intestines (or other internal organs) do not develop properly and protrude into the umbilical cord's base. This sac literally sits on the outside of the body, protected only by a thin membrane. After nine months of surgeries, invasive procedures and a life-saving operation to repair a spontaneous bowel perforation, he was finally discharged from hospital weighing only 12 pounds, coping with a collapsed lung and having never learned to take food by mouth and swallow.

Needless to say, Jonathan's parents required additional home health support for their son to remain safely at home. Fortunately Amanda Lee, an Occupational Therapist (OT) with VHA Rehab Solutions (formerly COTA Health's Rehabilitation Services) and VHA's child and family nursing team were brought in to help. Funded by the Toronto Central CCAC, this care collaboration meant that Jonathan received complex feeding care from his OT, wound care from a VHA paediatric visiting nurse and respite care from a VHA paediatric shift nurse. After months of slow and steady progress, Amanda, with support from Jonathan's medical team at the Hospital for Sick Children, his parents and the VHA nursing team, eventually developed a plan to wean Jonathan from his G-tube.

"Amanda was determined that he [Jonathan] would learn to swallow and eat and she worked tirelessly to help make that happen. I literally could not have imagined him being weaned from the G-tube, but thank God, she could," notes Diane, Jonathan's mother. "She believed in him. She provided us with tons of information and ideas. We were all in the team together working for Jonathan's well-being (even when it seemed it would never work for him)—something we simply could not have managed alone."

Much of Amanda's confidence was fortified by the support she received from VHA Rehab Solutions, including a community education best practice tool that was created in 2007 to assist therapists in the community with complex paediatric situations like Jonathan's. New providers may also

attend a new hire meeting, where additional teaching is provided on feeding, questions are answered and therapists actively problem solve case scenarios. Additionally, clinical consultation or joint visits with a clinical lead for any client are supported and encouraged. "I feel confident with the training I received at VHA. I am able to work effectively with clients, their families and the entire health care team to ensure my clients receive timely and appropriate services," says Amanda.

"The team is always looking for new ways to further improve the training of our talented professionals to support clinical expertise to improve the

lives of our clients," says

Barbara Cawley,

Executive Director of
VHA Rehab

Solutions. For its part, VHA Rehab Solutions co-founded the Paediatric Feeding Therapy Network in conjunction with the Hospital for Sick Children and Bloorview Kids Rehab to further focus

on complex feeding issues. It has also begun an extensive review of its paediatric feeding tool to evaluate service provider confidence with complex feeding cases and assess clinical practice adherence to organizational best-practice procedures. Procedures that ultimately can have an incredible impact on the children the tool was designed to help.

It's certainly so with Jonathan who continues to show great progress: he's now able to swallow most food, though not all. "Amanda was absolutely instrumental. We would not be at this place without her. A wean has to happen step by step, with minute attention to weight and interest in food," notes Diane.

"Amanda gave us concrete weekly strategies, but mostly, she gave us hope and belief that it was possible!"



Offering complex care and simple comforts since 1925

VHA SERVICES

- ✓ 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

- ✓ Registered Nurses/Registered Practical Nurses
- ✓ Personal Support Workers/Homemakers
- ✓ Occupational Therapists
- ✓ Physiotherapists
- ✓ Speech-Language Pathologists
- ✓ Dietitians
- ✓ Social Workers
- ✓ Client Service Coordinators/Supervisors
- ✓ Other skilled professionals as required

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.

All services can be made available in your own home, at school, in hospital or in a long-term care facility.



For more information, please call us at **416.489.2500** or **1.888.314.6622** or visit our web site at www.vha.ca



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