

It is often said that spring is a time of renewal. Although our weather seems trapped in winter's icy grip as I write this, the arrival of spring—in name if not in temperature—brings with it a sense of new things to come. At VHA, we have been very busy creating new things over the last few months, so when we sat down to consider a theme for this issue of Community Care Connection, the idea of new ventures practically jumped off the page. Improving our service to clients is always a high priority here at VHA, and as you'll see in the pages that follow, the past three months continue that focus.



Our Toronto rehab team is launching a pilot group program for infants with muscle tone issues. These new groups will enable families who cannot afford more common one-on-one rehab sessions to benefit from valuable instruction at a lower price point. The groups will equip caregivers with the tools to help their children build muscle, while also providing an opportunity for caregivers to connect with others who share their experience.

In this issue, you'll also read the latest update on our efforts to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. It is hard to believe that we're already into year two of this three-year journey, however in reading about the work that has been done in the first 12 months you'll see that we've managed to pack a lot of progress into one year.

There have been some exciting developments in our research department as well. VHA's study into how home care professionals adopt best practices into their work has just been published in the journal *Home HealthCare Services Quarterly*. Also, our research into hoarding and the resulting VHA Community Clutter and Hoarding Toolkit is highlighted in an extensive profile in the March 2013 issue of *Home Healthcare Nurse*. This comes quick on the heels of our Extreme Cleaning service's expansion to London, Ontario.

We anticipate an equally busy spring at VHA. Before we know it, June will be rolling around, and with it, our annual Heart of Home Care

Awards ceremony on June 10. This event is the highlight of our calendar and never fails to leave attendees deeply moved by the strength and compassion exhibited by our winners and nominees. Our guest speaker this year is Dr. Tiffany Chow, a neuroscientist and author of *The Memory Clinic: Stories of Hope and Healing for Alzheimer's Patients and their Families*. I encourage you to mention the awards to your networks and, better still, if you know an outstanding family caregiver in Ontario, submit their name now! The deadline for nominations has been extended to April 12.

Enjoy your spring!

Know a caregiver who is all heart?



Nominate them for a Heart of Home Care Award!

Presented by Teak Printing Services

If you know an amazing family caregiver who deserves recognition, tell us about them! Visit our website [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca) to download the nomination form.

Submit your completed form to [kruttan@vha.ca](mailto:kruttan@vha.ca) or mail it to:

Heart of Home Care  
VHA Home HealthCare  
Attn: Katy Ruttan  
30 Soudan Avenue, St. 600  
Toronto, ON M4S 1V6

DEADLINE EXTENDED TO APRIL 12TH!

# Worth the Weight

Barbara has started eating again. The upbeat 70 year old suffers from neuralgia, a severe pain along the left side of her face caused by nerve damage. It is often associated with Multiple Sclerosis, a disease she has lived with for three decades. As the pain grew more persistent, Barbara's food intake decreased, which led to considerable weight loss.

"When I met Barbara, she was eating oatmeal a couple of times a week and subsisting on glasses of Coke all day. She was 90 lbs and riddled with severe pressure sores. I was determined to make a difference," says Janet Chippin, one of VHA's Registered Dietitians.

Janet put Barbara on an aggressive nutrition plan that included high-calorie, high-protein nutritional supplements. She provided diet education to the lodger who cooks for Barbara and her husband, instructing him on ways to modify the texture of foods so that Barbara would not have to chew, yet would be able to swallow safely. Janet also showed him how to create meals suited to a high-energy, high-protein diet that would promote weight gain and facilitate Barbara's wound healing.



*VHA Dietitian Janet Chippin helps Barbara onto her scale.*

To ensure that Barbara stayed on the high-protein regimen, Janet made all of the arrangements for her to receive her nutritional supplements by prescription through her family physician, even including instructions about faxing it on to Barbara's pharmacy. "I wanted to ensure that no one had to run around with papers, and that the process worked seamlessly."

Barbara is now less burdened by the prospect of eating. "We've introduced foods in the pureed form, and she's eating twice a day now instead of twice a week," says Janet. Barbara has gained weight, and now falls into a much healthier bracket for her 5'6" height. Her wounds have also begun to heal, and she's experiencing less pain from her neuralgia, as flare-ups happen weeks apart now.

Barbara's independence has grown thanks to Janet's interventions. "I have a lot more energy now. I eat porridge, mashed potatoes and pureed meat and I'm not in pain when I eat. I didn't want to be 90 lbs. so I am very happy with my weight now," she says.

## Extreme Cleaning Expands to London

Hoarding and its associated clutter can pose a tremendous health and safety risk to people who live in or visit hoarding environments. In some cases, it is also grounds for eviction. VHA's Extreme Cleaning program helps people – many of whom suffer from mental health challenges – avoid impending eviction due to the unsanitary condition of their home. Since launching the program in Toronto in 2000, it has become a vital service to individuals at risk of eviction or institutionalization. In December, we began to offer extreme cleaning in London, Ontario as well.

"We're very excited to expand the service to London," says Cheryl Perera, VHA's Director of New

Ventures and Community Programs. "We consulted with several community agencies in the London area, including the municipal government, United Way, Canadian Mental Health Association, Fire Services, London's Response to Hoarding Coalition and the South West CCAC, and found a serious need for this service in the city."

Through this program, VHA staff conduct an assessment and do a thorough cleaning of the client's home to ensure it meets public health standards. We also make referrals on behalf of the client for long-term support services as needed. Our staff members are sensitive to the needs of the person living with

*(Continued on next page)*

# Get Moving, Baby!

This fall, VHA Rehab Solutions will launch an exciting new pilot therapy program for infants with low muscle tone and their caregivers. The program, geared for children 7-15 months of age, will provide education to caregivers on activities that promote motor development, and will offer them a venue in which to practice the exercises they learn.

This program is a first of its kind for VHA. “Generally infants are seen for one-to-one therapy. This is the dominant model of service, and the cost of private services is prohibitive for many families,” says Amanda Lee, Occupational Therapist and Clinical Lead for Paediatrics on VHA’s Toronto Central Team. “Although we will be charging for the group, we’re doing so on a cost recovery basis that is significantly lower than private one-to-one therapy.”

The program’s one-hour sessions will take place once a week for eight weeks. “We will cover exercises that strengthen muscles, as well as education for the caregivers on different topics such as equipment, shoes, motor development, etc.” says Amanda.

Through the program, Amanda and group co-lead Leila Amin, a Paediatric Occupational Therapist on VHA’s Child and Family Team, hope to achieve more than increased caregiver knowledge of exercises. “We also hope that they will feel more self-efficient and will also build a network of peers who understand the challenges they experience. Many caregivers of children

with special needs feel isolated in their communities as they do not feel their children can participate in groups run in their neighbourhood. It is important for them to connect with other parents going through the same sort of challenges they are,” says Leila.

The infant rehab group program will take place at VHA’s 700 Lawrence Avenue West location beginning September 26th. Morning and afternoon programs will be offered. Registration is limited to 10 infants and 10 caregivers per group.

“If this pilot is successful, we hope to run it again and potentially expand on the types of groups we offer,” says Amanda. People can express their interest to Leila Amin at 416-482-4627 ext. 2069. The therapists will connect with eligible families to schedule an assessment to ensure their child is appropriate for the group.



## Extreme Cleaning Expands to London *(Continued)*

clutter. Addressing hoarding behaviour can be highly stressful to the client, so our staff work with and involve them throughout the cleaning and organization process.

“The most important thing is to help clients remain in their home. They do not want to go to a shelter environment or a long-term care facility,” says Perera. “But it’s also critical that clients are safe as they remain in their homes. Our follow-up support helps clients avoid relapse, learn the necessary life skills to avoid eviction, and connects them with other community support services they may need.”





# Eye on Quality

VHA's quality improvement activities continue in full gear since our successful Accreditation Survey in November 2012. Priorities in 2013 include:

- Client experience improvement efforts and careful monitoring of our client survey results and other performance indicators to assess our success;
- Foundational work to build VHA's capacity to incorporate the voice of the client in a variety of ways (e.g. beyond surveys and focus groups) to improve our services and better meet client needs;

- Continuing to promote a culture of client- and family-centred care.

Many of the improvement initiatives are interconnected and we recognize the need to coordinate our activities. It is also critically important to involve our front-line staff and service providers to help guide planning and implementation of effective, sustainable improvements. Many people across VHA are involved and many more will be invited to assist in 2013.



## On Solid Footing in Our BPSO Journey

In previous issues of Community Care Connection, we shared the news that VHA is seeking to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO<sup>®</sup>) with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO). Having started in April 2012, we are now officially entering year two of our three-year journey and we've achieved some amazing progress in three of our five Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs): Client Centred Care; Assessment & Management of Stage I – IV Pressure Ulcers; and Prevention of Falls & Fall Injuries in the Older Adult.

We formed interdisciplinary project teams for each of our BPGs, which are primarily composed of VHA nurses, personal support workers and rehab professionals in addition to office staff from relevant departments. Next, we tested some small pilots in our geographic teams, which revealed successes we could replicate and important lessons that will allow us to successfully launch evidence-based practice across the entire organization.

We noted, for example, some challenges in consistent use of the Braden scale during our pilot of the Assessment & Management of Stage I – IV Pressure Ulcers BPG. The Braden scale measures risk of pressure ulcers and allows our point-of-care staff to address client-centered needs in prevention and management of skin integrity. Through the pilot, we were able to identify barriers and reinforce evidence-based practice through education, case studies and job shadowing. The pilot proposed better ways we can support our staff in implementing evidence-based practice at the point of care to improve client outcomes.

This year, we will start to roll out the best practices across VHA and evaluate client outcomes and sustainability. Our 44 BPSO<sup>®</sup> champions are working hard to spread the word to their colleagues about evidence-based practice and support the teams to adopt change and implement BPGs. This will result in better client outcomes and client satisfaction and create standards of excellence we can be proud of.



## Our Special Guest

We are excited to announce that Dr. Tiffany Chow will be our special guest speaker at the 2013 Heart of Home Care Awards. Dr. Chow is a renowned neuroscientist and author of *The Memory Clinic*. Her insights into memory, dementia and tactics to stave off memory loss are sure to fascinate our event attendees. Please join us on June 10<sup>th</sup>! RSVP to [ptrian@vha.ca](mailto:ptrian@vha.ca).

# Easier Said Than Done: Implementing Evidence in Home Care Practice

Sharing best practice information is the cornerstone of healthcare quality improvement, and access to colleagues is the foundation of this knowledge sharing. But such access can be a challenge in the home health care sector, where service providers are dispersed and do not have the same opportunities to interact with colleagues as their counterparts in institutional health care settings. VHA recently completed research into how home care providers felt about their ability to independently implement best practices, and how their knowledge and beliefs affect how they engage with best practice initiatives. The research was recently published in *Home HealthCare Services Quarterly*.

As more service providers work as “independent contractors”, they have increasing responsibility and authority over critical decisions about client care. Thus, the pursuit of best practice knowledge often falls squarely on their shoulders and depends on their propensity for inquiry. VHA collected data from

29 home health care providers from physiotherapy, occupational therapy and nursing during a falls prevention best practice implementation. Each completed a survey on self-efficacy for evidence-based practice, and a smaller group participated in focus groups.

The study showed that home health care providers value best practices in everyday care, but they may need to be involved in developing those best practice initiatives in order to adopt them and engage with them consistently in their work. Survey respondents indicated relatively low overall self-efficacy to independently enact evidence-based practice. Together with the focus group findings, the study revealed that home care providers may require support from researchers, facilitators and/or administrators to confidently implement evidence into their practice.

For more information on this study, contact Sandra McKay at [smckay@vha.ca](mailto:smckay@vha.ca).

## Journal Spotlights VHA’s Hoarding Support Toolkit

Awareness of hoarding has grown considerably thanks to recent television shows and news coverage, but how to address hoarding behaviour can be a mystery for many workers who encounter it. This mental health disorder—experienced by about five per cent of the population—can lead to dangerous living conditions, impairment to functioning and distress for people who live in and encounter hoarding conditions.

VHA has long worked with people who have clutter and hoarding issues, and we recognized that home health care providers needed a way to understand the disorder and support people living with it. In response, we created a toolkit and accompanying training workshops for the home care community to build capacity to respond to hoarding behaviour.

In the March 2013 issue of the journal *Home Healthcare Nurse*, the toolkit is extensively profiled in an article by Catherine Chater, Jay Shaw and Sandra McKay. It shares the toolkit’s insights into

the motivations of hoarders, the types of resistance that they may express to intervention, and describes the experiences of clients and health providers who encounter hoarding in their community practice. It also highlights specific strategies from the toolkit for intervening through a skill-development and a harm-reduction framework.

The hoarding toolkit combines worksheets and educational materials that clients, home service providers and lay persons alike can use to address any phase in a hoarder’s evolution. It is assembled so that viewers can select the most appropriate worksheets for the specific situations they encounter, offering the flexibility and breadth of resources required to adequately address the range of needs arising from situations of extreme clutter.

To order VHA’s Community Clutter and Hoarding Toolkit, visit the Publications section at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca). To read the journal article, visit <http://bit.ly/hhnurse>.



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](http://www.vhaottawa.ca).



Visit our website at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)

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

### 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

- Dietitians
- Occupational Therapists
- Personal Support Workers/Homemakers
- Physiotherapists
- Registered Nurses/Registered Practical Nurses
- Social Workers
- 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](mailto: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 interim editor of Community Care Connection

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