



Complex care, Simple comforts

care connection



Above:
A volunteer, Ty Hopman (left) and
Janice Bechard-Meyerink, RPN (right)

What is Your Blood Pressure?

Barring special circumstances, 120/80 to 140/90 is generally considered a healthy blood pressure range for seniors. But many of us don't track this important indicator of health. High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke, and a major cause of heart disease including heart attacks. According to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, about 42% of Canadians have high blood pressure and don't know it.

But that is changing for seniors in Chatham-Kent and Lambton County. VHA Home HealthCare has invested charitable dollars into peer-supported community blood pressure clinics for seniors in Chatham, Wallaceburg and Sarnia.

It began as a community research program in Wallaceburg called C-CHAP, Community Cardiovascular Health Awareness Program. C-CHAP's creators* chose VHA to lead the community research and evaluation effort in Wallaceburg. The idea was to recruit and train seniors to provide free blood pressure monitoring and peer cardiovascular health education through a coordinated effort of local volunteers, pharmacies, and family doctors.

What a success! VHA nurse,

Chuck Opavsky with help from another VHA nurse, Janice Bechard-Meyerink, recruited and trained 16 enthusiastic senior volunteers to run the ten blood pressure and health education clinics. Almost all local family doctors and pharmacies participated. Each of the 10 clinics served 40 – 50 seniors.

When the research component and the funding for the clinics ended in November 2006, those sixteen volunteers and Chuck Opavsky could not let such a successful health promotion program die. In fact, they wanted to expand it to the neighbouring communities to reach more seniors.

continued inside on page 5



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* The Department of Family Medicine, McMaster University; the Elisabeth Bruyère Research Institute, a University of Ottawa and SCO Health Service Partnership as well as the Team for Individualizing Pharmacotherapy in Primary Care for Seniors.

in this issue



**VHA Participates
in an Interdisciplinary Stroke
Rehabilitation Project**

2007 Heroes in the Home





VHA'S PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

VHA Participates in an Interdisciplinary Stroke Rehabilitation Project

The Stroke Project is a collaborative Research Project between the Toronto Central CCAC, McMaster University's System-Linked Research Unit on Health and Social Services Utilization, and several service provider agencies, including VHA Home HealthCare.

The overall goal of the Stroke Project is to lower the number of stroke survivors in acute care hospitals or other institutions by preventing recurrent strokes and promoting successful community reintegration. In order to do that, the Stroke Project is evaluating the success (acceptability, safety, outcomes and costs) of a specialized interdisciplinary team approach to community-based stroke rehabilitation.

Stroke survivors and their unpaid caregivers, who are eligible for home care services, are randomly assigned to either regular home care or the interdisciplinary stroke rehabilitation team. Clients in the second group receive home care services from a team of service providers (CCAC Care Coordinator, Registered Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Speech Language Pathologist, Nutritionist, Personal Support Workers) with experience and training in strengths-based stroke care. VHA has specially trained a

core group of experienced PSWs to be part of the interdisciplinary team serving the clients in the study. The team provides coordinated, evidence-based stroke rehabilitation services through weekly case conferencing, a written interdisciplinary care plan, and joint visits.

Information is collected at the beginning of the study and after 12-months through questionnaires and reports from the Toronto Central CCAC and the service provider agencies. Consistent outcome measurement tools will be used, measuring physical functioning, quality of life, level of depression, and use of other health and social services by the client and the caregiver. The study will help to identify which stroke survivors and caregivers benefit from this team approach to community-based stroke rehabilitation. The study is currently in the recruitment and data collection phase, and the results will be available in early 2009.

For more information, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Maureen Markle-Reid, RN, MScN, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, McMaster University, mreid@mcmaster.ca.



Other Partnership News...

At the OACCAC Conference on June 7th, the Community Ethics Project Team members received the Systems Partnership Award. The Award recognizes the collaborative efforts of system partners who are engaged in a project that is significant and innovative and impacts the local CCAC, the community at large, and client welfare. Caroline Hunter, a Manager at VHA, accepted the Award on behalf of VHA for her work as Co-Chair of The Community Ethics Team. The Community Ethics project was initiated by Toronto CCAC and team

members include nine service provider agencies, representatives of the CCACs, and George Brown College.

VHA Home HealthCare is joining with Dr. Mark Nowaczynski, COTA Health, and SPRINT to develop a service delivery and research project piloting a multidisciplinary team approach to caring for frail elderly individuals in their homes. The team is currently looking for research partners and hopes to launch the project in the fall of 2007.

2007 Heroes in the Home

VHA Home HealthCare's Heroes in the Home award recognizes the extraordinary dedication of the family members and friends who provide the bulk of the care for their elderly, chronically ill, or disabled loved ones to keep their loved ones at home. We hope our Heroes' stories will be an inspiration and comfort to other sometimes isolated caregivers and will call attention to the need for support for these devoted caregivers.

Madeline Calaminici

Madeline Calaminici has been in a caregiving role since 1987. That year, when her children were still in elementary school, Madeline's husband was diagnosed with a neurological disease causing him to become gradually more and more physically disabled. She cared for him while working full-time and caring for her two children as well. Madeline tells us that her husband had a positive attitude and a sense of humour throughout his ordeal.



In accepting her award, Madeline Calaminici acknowledged the help she receives in the form of caregiver relief from Downsview Services for Seniors.



Madeline with her nominator, Nancy Fazzalari, from Downsview Services for Seniors

Then Madeline's father died and Madeline moved her mother into her home to care for her. Madeline's mother has mid to late stage Alzheimers. Now Madeline was caring for her husband who required heavy physical care and her mother whose dementia required constant redirection and attention.

Sadly, Madeline eventually lost her husband to his disease. She says that continuing to care for her mother helps her to cope with his loss and her grief.

Madeline's dedication to her husband and her mother, and her gift for caregiving, so impressed the staff at Downsview Services for Seniors that they nominated her for this award.



Zena Spurney

Our other 2007 Hero in the Home has an unusual story. In 1978, Zena Spurney volunteered as a driver for the Scarborough Recreational Club for Disabled Adults. There she met Barry.

Barry was injured in a car accident in 1969 when he was 17 years old. As a result of the accident, he became a quadriplegic and had been living in hospitals for nine years.

Zena was impressed with Barry, and as Zena describes it, she and Barry "clicked". Barry is a talented graphic artist, an advocate for the disabled and generally a great guy and personal force.

In 1979, Zena and her mother (with whom Zena lived) asked Barry if he'd like to move into their home. From 1979 until 1995, Zena worked a full-time job as well as providing the care Barry required.



Zena Spurney, accepting her award from Vikas Sharma, Chair of the VHA Board of Directors and Carol Annett, VHA's CEO/President.



Zena, Barry King, and Linda Woolcott, PSW. In accepting her award, Zena said she could not have managed without the help of VHA.

In 1995, Zena was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, had to leave work for awhile and needed assistance in caring for Barry. Zena arranged for some professional personal support through the CCAC and VHA, and got March of Dimes to modify the bungalow she lives in so that Barry could have real baths instead of sponge baths. It is the VHA PSW, Linda Woolcott, who nominated Zena for this award.

Zena is now back at work. She works a 3-11 shift. She gets Barry up, feeds her Mom and Barry breakfast and lunch, leaves dinner ready for them, and then heads off for her workday.

Zena chose to take on this extraordinary caregiving role, and she has found fulfillment in that role for over 25 years.

More Photos from the Annual General Meeting



AGM participants listen raptly to Dr. Mark Nowaczynski's presentation on house calls and the frail elderly.



Dr. Mark Nowaczynski emphasizing the importance of homecare for the frail elderly.



Vikas Sharma, Chair of VHA's Board, delivering his comments regarding VHA's 2006 activities and accomplishments.

Do you want to know more?

Toronto Star columnist, Carol Goar, published two articles; one describing Dr. Nowaczynski's presentation (www.thestar.com/article/226006) and one describing our Heroes in the Home recipients (www.thestar.com/article/227223).

For anyone moved by the stories of our 2007 featured heroes, please review the report, entitled Homebound, prepared by Carewatch Toronto. It can be found on their website at www.carewatchtoronto.org. That report details the results of numerous focus groups with family caregivers; their burdens, their rewards, and their needs.

Blood Pressure *continued from page 1*

VHA agreed to fund the expansion of the program to Chatham and Sarnia for at least a year. The first Chatham clinic was held in March 2007. The Wallaceburg senior volunteers staffed that clinic but local seniors will be recruited in Chatham and Sarnia to help with future clinics.



Volunteers, Irene Brodeur (right) and Pete Hensel (left)

Engaging seniors to do health education with other seniors, supervised by a nurse, and coordinated with doctors and pharmacies, has been a recipe for successful health promotion. VHA is exploring partnership opportunities with other agencies interested in stroke prevention, such as the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance and the London Health Sciences Centre Stroke Strategy for Southwestern Ontario. VHA hopes to find partners and funding to allow us to further expand the use of this model.

We Welcome Your Support

MEMBERSHIP

VHA welcomes new members. Consistent with our not-for-profit tradition and to help us be the best we can be, we encourage members of the communities we serve to participate in VHA's governance. There is a nominal membership fee of \$25.00 (which can be waived in special circumstances). For more information, we invite you to contact Patricia Triantafilou at 416.482.4617 or patricia@vha.ca.

DONATIONS

Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare increase the quality of life of vulnerable people in your community. Donations are welcome, and can be mailed, made by phone (credit card contribution) or in person at our 170 Merton Street office. You may also want to consider making a "tribute gift" in honour of a loved one or special friend. To all of our donors, our sincere thanks for your generosity.

IF YOU

have any comments or suggestions regarding our newsletter, please feel free to contact the editor of

COMMUNITY
Care
connection

Joy Klopp

at (416) 482-8782 or 1-888-314-6622
or visit our web site at www.vha.ca



Eye On QUALITY

• VHA Home HealthCare Awarded Our Third CCHSA Accreditation

VHA Home HealthCare successfully completed our third accreditation survey in November 2006 with the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA). The final report arrived in February 2007, and we were very pleased to learn that VHA was awarded full accreditation for another three-year period. Many successes were noted in the report including two overall comments of which we are very proud:

- The surveyors assessed VHA against the new Patient Safety required practices and found that all 19 requirements applicable to VHA had been fully implemented; and
- The surveyors praised VHA for our demonstrated "level of CQI maturity and many initiatives that comply with the principles of CQI."

This award was the result of a great team effort. Our sincere thanks and appreciation goes to our staff, clients, volunteers and community partners for all their assistance and support.

• Other Quality News

VHA established a new Patient Safety Committee this spring to ensure continuous improvement in patient safety practices at VHA. VHA decided that the Client/Patient Safety Improvement Plan (in progress over the past couple of years) now needs a dedicated working group to oversee safety issues, identify incidence trends and systemic improvement opportunities, as well as to implement training and educational initiatives to promote best practices and a positive Patient Safety Culture.

For more information about any of our quality initiatives, please contact Gloria Kay at (416) 482-8772 or e-mail: gkay@vha.ca

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

VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- ✓ Registered nurses/registered practical nurses
- ✓ Personal support workers/homemakers
- ✓ Client service coordinators/supervisors
- ✓ Other skilled professionals as required

VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of the United Way of Greater Toronto and a contracted provider with Toronto Central, Central, Central East, Central West, 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, 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



United Way
of Greater Toronto

Community Care Connection is available electronically. If you'd like to cut down on the paper landing on your desk and be able to share the newsletter with your colleagues by a click of the mouse, just send your email address to jklopp@vha.ca.



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