

Community Paramedicine Backgrounder

Community Paramedicine Program announced for Northumberland County

- On February 21, 2020, the Province announced \$300,000 in funding to launch a Community Paramedicine program in Northumberland County.
- One of three Year One priority projects for the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland, the Community Paramedicine program will leverage the skills and training of Northumberland Paramedics to improve local health outcomes as well as patient and caregiver experience of healthcare in our community, particularly for rural populations within Northumberland County.

Background

- Northumberland County has an older population than the Ontario average (Statistics Canada), with many residents living in rural areas.
- Approximately 80 per cent of ambulance calls in Northumberland are for the proportion of the population aged 60 or older, and the rate of growth of that demographic is expected to be greater than any other age group in the county (Statistics Canada).
- Because the population tends to be older in rural areas, the rates of chronic disease, disability and mortality tend to be higher than what is seen in urban areas (Gamm, 2003 Burgess, 2012).
- It is estimated that a Community Paramedicine program in Northumberland will divert up to 30 per cent of low-acuity calls, reducing demands on the emergency response system, and alleviating chronic pressures within the health care system.

Overview

- Community Paramedicine is a non-emergency health care service, delivered by specially trained paramedics, that is designed to improve access to care, particularly for vulnerable populations, and enhance connections between patients and services in the community.
- Under Northumberland's Community Paramedicine program, Northumberland Paramedics will apply their full range of skills in the community, expanding their practice beyond pre-hospital emergency care to also deliver illness prevention and health promotion services.
- Examples of services provided could include assisting with diabetic care, doing medication assessment, providing flu vaccinations, conducting post-injury or illness evaluation, and other care functions.
- In collaboration with local health care partners, paramedics will provide these community-based health care services in non-urgent settings, delivering a more coordinated continuum of care for patients, and reducing 911 calls, unnecessary emergency department visits and hospital admissions.

Implementation in Northumberland

- The goal of Northumberland's Community Paramedicine program will be to help community members get the right care, at the right place, at the right time.
- In Year One of the program, target populations will include frail elderly individuals, individuals with mental health conditions or substance addictions, individuals experiencing homelessness, and individuals receiving palliative care.
- Services will be delivered across three program areas, including:
 - **Remote monitoring:** Using Bluetooth-enabled technology in the patient home to capture vital signs such as blood sugar, blood pressure and heart rate, which is uploaded to a cloud and monitored daily.
 - **Mobile clinics:** Wellness clinics servicing community members who cannot effectively access care due to socio-economic, mobility or other barriers.
 - **Home visits and assessments:** Referrals from community partners to provide follow-up care.
- The program will be based on a referral model, with community partners such as primary care practitioners, the Geriatric Assessment and Intervention Network (GAIN), Community Care Northumberland (CCN), mental health services, and others engaging Northumberland Paramedics to support follow-up with identified patients.
- The program will accept referrals from community partners 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with two dedicated paramedics providing service 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

Anticipated outcomes

As a collaborative health care service, Northumberland's Community Paramedicine program is intended to complement and support the work of local health care providers to achieve:

- Improved patient and caregiver experience of healthcare in Northumberland;
- Improved local health outcomes;
- Reduction in the number of low acuity and repeat 911 calls;
- Reduction in the number of unnecessary emergency department visits (conditions that could have been addressed through an alternative community service) and emergency department congestion;
- Reduction in hospital admissions.

For more information

- To keep up-to-date on the progress of Northumberland's Community Paramedicine program, along with other Year One priority projects for the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland, visit the website www.ohtnorthumberland.ca.