

## Overview

The Guelph and Area Ontario Health Team (OHT) was one of 158 Ontario teams that submitted an application to the Ministry of Health for consideration. Of those submissions, 31, including Guelph, were invited to the next step and submit a full application by Oct. 9. So far, 14 healthcare organizations\* in Guelph and surrounding area have become core members of the new *Guelph and Area Ontario Health Team* (Guelph and Area OHT).

In developing our submission, numerous engagement sessions have been held over the past number of months involving patients, families, persons with lived experience, clinicians and other health care providers. From those meetings, the first two local priority populations were identified - palliative care and mental health & addictions.

## Palliative Care

### Background

With an aging population, it is anticipated that there will be a 52% increase in deaths over the next 10 years in our region. In order to meet the needs of these patients, families and their caregivers, the Guelph and Area OHT will require greater capacity to provide community-based, integrated palliative care services. During the engagement sessions, we heard families and caregivers wanted to be included as partners in the care plan but not leading the plan and should always know the next step in their treatment and/or care.

From front-line staff need role clarity, team awareness and shared understanding related to the patient journey. Palliative care providers need more information and training. They also want time to have discussions that are culturally sensitive about serious illness and the end-of-life stage.

Finally, Guelph and Area OHT must ensure communication is clear and informative about the disease trajectory from diagnosis to treatment(s), to the palliative approach to care, through to end-of-life care. Care must be based in the community, not the hospital and the OHT must ensure trained professionals engage in serious illness conversations as soon as a life-limiting illness is diagnosed.

### Year 1 targets for Palliative Care

- Trial existing and emerging triage mechanisms to support fewer patients to the Emergency Department in the last 30 days of their life
- Develop a consistent mechanism for identifying patients with life limiting illness by March 31, 2020.
- Identify those who are involved in serious illness conversations and support them to develop the skills and provide the necessary resources by March 31, 2020
- By December 31, 2019 seriously ill patients, family and other caregivers will have access to 24/7 support via a "serious illness call line."

- Add/update a (new) social engagement component in the patient's care plan by September 2020 which would be provided by volunteers

## **Mental Health & Addictions**

### **Background**

The needs of patients struggling with mental health and/or addiction (MH&A) are often complex. It is both overwhelming and difficult for these individuals to access appropriate and timely support(s) in our current system. As a result, many individuals struggling with complex MH&A fall through the cracks and do not receive the level of care they require and at times, do not receive any care at all. The Guelph and Area OHT is committed to developing one integrated MH&A service that has the capacity to meet the unique and complex needs of all Guelph and Area OHT residents with MH&A in a timely and patient-centered manner.

Extensive engagement sessions have taken place over the past three months involving those with MH&A lived experience, their peers, peer workers, family member(s), caregivers, outreach workers, front-line staff, management and directors from various MH&A organizations, first responders, physicians and nursing staff.

Three of the key change ideas that have evolved from engagements include:

- Develop a MH&A service that is integrated with primary care to support primary care providers to effectively address the needs of their patients with MH&A issues, while enabling cross-sector learning and an increasing capacity for both physicians and front-line/peer workers to more effectively support individuals with MH&A
- Develop a centralized, low-barrier, interdisciplinary hub capable of providing timely and flexible access to rapid assessments and wrap-around care to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals experiencing complex MH&A
- Expand mobile teams and services to better reach and meet the needs of vulnerable individuals experiencing complex MH&A

### **Year 1 targets for MH&A**

- Patients will have fewer repeat visits to the emergency department for mental health and/or addictions issues
- There will be fewer 911 and police calls for MH&A related issues
- There will be fewer instances of self-harm including suicide/overdose
- Patients won't wait as long to access the MH&A support they require
- Patients will report improved quality of care
- More patients with MH&A issues will report their family practice feels safe, welcoming, free of stigma

Across both palliative care and MH&A, the need for timely and coordination communication was identified. Specifically, discharge processes always including communication with primary care provider and sharing of the patient's care plan amongst members of the care team.

Accordingly, a third priority has been added for the Guelph and Area OHT in year 1 – namely, to integrate the functions of care coordination into primary care and create 'Integrated Primary Care Teams' (IPCTs). Primary Care Team across Guelph and area will be enhanced so that they have the

capacity to deliver ALL of the patient's primary care needs including care coordination, system navigation and supported transitions. Other key features of this emerging model include:

- Each patient on each IPCT in the Guelph and Area OHT will have a "primary contact person" (PCP) who is responsible for proactively managing the patient's care needs including coordinating care and navigating the system.
- "Referral" and "discharge" will be eliminated – when a patient's care needs exceed the capacity or capability of the integrated primary care team, additional providers and services will be invited to join the patient's care team (rather than patients being referred to a separate and distinct provider).

All care designed and delivered in the Guelph and Area OHT will follow a "Virtual Care-First" philosophy whereby digital health tools and enablers will always be considered for use in order to support the best possible patient experience and outcome.

A foundational expectation and objective of this system transformation is to develop a health care system in the Guelph and Area in which all persons working in the health care system not only have a good experience, but find joy in the work that they do. The Guelph and Area OHT is tasked with improving the health of the population in our community and considers focusing on the experiences of those working in the system as a key part of success!

## **Conclusion**

The October 9<sup>th</sup> submission to the Ministry is a description of our progress towards becoming a fully designed OHT. The full application will be reviewed by the Ministry of Health with a decision expected before the end of the year. Regardless of the Ministry's decision, Guelph and Area partners will continue to work towards becoming a fully mature OHT. This is an exciting time in health care and a significant opportunity for all providers in Guelph and area to contribute to the development of an efficient health care system in Guelph and Area that improves patient experience and outcomes AND provider experience.

**If you have any questions, concerns or comments OR if you would like to contribute to the Guelph & Area Ontario Health Team, please contact Emmi Perkins ([emmi.perkins@lhins.on.ca](mailto:emmi.perkins@lhins.on.ca))**

### **\* Guelph and Area OHT members:**

Canadian Mental Health Association WW  
eHealth Centre for Excellence  
Guelph Family Health Team  
Hospice Wellington  
St. Joseph's Health Centre Guelph  
Stonehenge Therapeutic Community

East Wellington Family Health Team  
Guelph Community Health Centre  
Guelph General Hospital  
Sanguen Health Centre  
Traverse Independence  
The Elliott Community