

Niagara West Shared Care Model: A Canadian best practice developed at the WLMH and in our Community

The Niagara West Shared Care Model integrates primary care services with specialized palliative care services. Family physicians and primary care nurses receive support from a palliative care team of consultant specialists. This model is an integral part of the local palliative care team, the Niagara West Palliative Care Team (NWPCT). The local team consists of a palliative care physician, a palliative care nurse clinician, a psychospiritual clinician, a bereavement counsellor, and a dedicated palliative home care manager.

The model pivots on the “Palliative Care Nurse Clinician” as an overall system and patient navigator – that is a resource person who will act as principle contact to provide direction to both the patient and the team of doctors, specialists and care professionals.

The key services provided by such a model are end-of-life care, educational services, home and community care, psychosocial support for patients and families, spiritual/pastoral care and bereavement services.

A Focus on the Individual Patient’s Well-being

The Niagara West Shared Care Model is the program approach used by the NWPCT. This group of professionals has two inter-related roles and operates in a shared care approach. First, it provides 24/7 palliative care support for family physicians and community nurses; and second, it provides palliative care and bereavement support for patients and families. The NWPCT consults and visits patients and families, regardless of care setting, according to the needs expressed by the family doctors or community nurses. All activities are planned with the individual patient’s well-being foremost in mind. For example, joint visits with the primary care providers are possible. The 24/7 support to physicians and community nurses is provided using an on-call roster.

The History of the Niagara West Shared Care Model

The shared care model is integrated into the existing palliative care program hosted at the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital where it was initially funded by the Hospital and supported by the Hospital’s family physicians and nurses. It began in 1997 as an informal model, where a partial team of palliative care physician and nursing resources at the hospital provided continuous support to primary care physicians and nurses in delivering palliative care to patients across various settings in the region. Between 2002 and 2005, the model received “Demonstration Project” funding from Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This funding led to the model’s formalization and the formation of the existing, regional NWPCT. The team now provides palliative care support to primary health care providers using a shared care approach. The NWPCT is now a partnership between the Hospital and the local Community Care Access Centre and the community at large. The NWPCT saw the need for and helped to champion the construction of the McNally House, a free-standing hospice on the hospital grounds in 2007. This hospice is also served by the NWPCT, particularly the palliative care nurse clinician and physician who help oversees the clinical operations and provides guidance to the family physicians and nursing staff.

For more information, visit www.wlmh.on.ca or contact:

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