



Niagara Health System
Système De Santé De Niagara

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, September 10, 2014

NHS receives grant for project helping dialysis patients connect

A pilot project developed by Niagara Health System that aims to open lines of communication for kidney disease patients has received a \$49,500 grant.

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) recently announced funding support for 22 teams from healthcare organizations across Canada to partner with patients and families on quality improvement initiatives. Included in that group is a Niagara Health System improvement project that will feature an online forum between patients through Google Plus and also include a monthly online chat for patients to connect with health experts. The goal is to help patients support each other, share information and provide feedback to program leadership.

“Owing to the nature of their illness, requiring chronic disease management, many of these patients are visiting the hospital several times per week, up to a maximum of five visits and will maintain such a routine for the duration of their life,” says Martin Ruaux, Director of the NHS Kidney Care Program. “The constant interaction with the system creates a significant opportunity to partner with patients and their families to make improvements for their quality of life and care.”

Patients at the hospital participating in the online forums will connect through the health system’s IBTs (Integrated Bedside Terminals).

Consultation with patients showed that although they visit the hospital regularly and often see the same fellow dialysis patients, they feel isolated, reporting the lack of physical proximity and noise from equipment in the dialysis area as barriers to interaction.

“These patients have expressed an interest in increasing their connections with one another in order to improve their sense of community as a patient population and feel more empowered in their decision making,” Mr. Ruaux says. “The project will also provide valuable insight into the potential for providing this service to other NHS patients requiring supports to manage chronic conditions.”

St. Catharines dialysis patient Paul Zuwala, who has kidney cancer and undergoes three three-hour dialysis treatments each week, helped NHS plan the project.

“Getting dialysis is very much an isolating procedure. It doesn’t allow for a lot of social interaction,” he says. “Anything we can do to help patients connect and navigate the system will be helpful.”

Through the Partnering with Patients and Families for Quality Improvement collaborative, CFHI is providing seed funding and program support, including evaluation and coaching. Teams will develop, adapt and share tools and approaches, implementing them in their respective organizations. Support will be provided by experts who have successfully engaged patients and families in quality improvement initiatives and have advanced patient- and family-centered care.

“CFHI’s support for patient engagement projects has demonstrated the transformative effect of the patient voice in healthcare,” says CFHI President Maureen O’Neil. “Giving patients and families a seat at the table will improve not only their own care, but healthcare for all Canadians.”

ABOUT THE NHS KIDNEY CARE PROGRAM

The Kidney Care Program provides dialysis services in Niagara Falls (at a community-based satellite centre) and at the Welland and St. Catharines hospitals.) At the St. Catharines Site, the Kidney Care Program supports the treatment of up to 180 dialysis patients on a weekly basis.

ABOUT THE CFHI

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to accelerating healthcare improvement by working with provinces, territories and other healthcare partners to promote efficient healthcare that delivers better outcomes. With a \$10 million annual federal investment, CFHI supports the development of innovations that could save provincial-territorial healthcare budgets over \$1 billion per year. CFHI is funded through an agreement with the Government of Canada.

Media contact: Steven Gallagher, Communications Specialist, 905-378-4647, ext. 43879; steven.gallagher@niagarahealth.on.ca