
New technology helps residents with chronic diseases monitor their health

Technology improves access to monitoring for seniors in North Simcoe Muskoka

Toronto, ON (August 5, 2008) - Residents of North Simcoe Muskoka who are living with chronic diseases now have a new, easy way to monitor their vital signs, providing the comfort of knowing all is well or giving an early warning sign when further action is required.

Re-ACT® uses wireless technology to measure up to six vital signs and transmits the results to a remote monitoring centre. Here, the results are tracked and the nurse facilitates interventions as appropriate. This could include a call to the user to review the information, a call to their family doctor or specialist, or a visit to assess the needs for additional care. The system will not replace all nursing visits, but can significantly reduce the number of visits required. In addition, the monitoring function has been shown to decrease the number of ER visits and hospital admissions for people using the system.

A partnership between the North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre, We Care Home Health Services and Healthanywhere, a division of IgeaCare, the program is an Aging at Home initiative funded through the North Simcoe Muskoka - Local Health Integration Network (NSM LHIN).

"We are excited to be part of this partnership", said John Schram, President and CEO of We Care Health Services. "It demonstrates how government and industry can work together to provide innovative, cost saving solutions to the challenges health care is facing today."

Chronic disease is a critical driver of growing health care expenditures, leading to an unsustainable health care system. Over 55% (or \$32 million) of total direct and indirect health care costs are attributable to chronic disease. Some of the facts:

- 83% of Ontarians over age 45 (nearly 4 million) have a chronic disease
- 70% of these people (2.78 million) have two or more chronic diseases
- 59% of deaths are cause by a major chronic disease
- 90% of type 2 diabetes, 80% of coronary heart disease and one third of cancers can be avoided by changing to a healthier diet, increasing physical activity and stopping smoking (WHO 2003)
- up to 90% of COPD could be avoided by the elimination of cigarette smoking.

Regular monitoring of blood pressure, pulse, weight, blood glucose and blood oxygen from their own home is expected to allow seniors to maintain independence in their own home while providing peace of mind for their families. Up to 100 clients can be monitored by one Registered Nurse.

Bill Innes, Executive Director of North Simcoe Muskoka CCAC said "Re-ACT is the first significant technology available to residents of North Simcoe Muskoka to remotely monitor vital signs. This is an innovation which will become increasingly important as our population ages, chronic disease becomes more prevalent and the shortage of health professionals becomes increasingly acute."

The goal of the Re-ACT® program is to help individuals develop skills for healthy living and managing their disease. The program will emphasize the individual's and their family's role in their health and help them become an integral member of their health care team. It will also engage them in decision-making, goal setting and care planning and provide access to education programs and health information.

Innovation is needed to maintain a sustainable health care system. Re-ACT® is one such innovation that will increase access to the health care system for many seniors. The partnership created to develop and deliver this system, with the support of Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, is one example of government and industry working together to improve the health of Ontarians.

North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre is one of 14 centres across the province that can help the public access government-funded home care services and long-term care homes. We also help people to navigate the array of community support and health agencies in our communities.

We Care Health Services Inc. (We Care) is the largest, independently owned homecare company in Canada, with a presence in over 50 communities across the country. We Care is committed to maintaining a standard of excellence in the provision of care, and in responding to changing needs within the community.

Healthanywhere, a Division of IgeaCare Systems Inc., delivers breakthrough wireless eHealth solutions to improve quality of life and healthcare outcomes for both clients and healthcare providers. The professional web portal is able to capture and share healthcare information with authorized care providers.

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