

Western Champlain Health Link Communiqué

A Patient's Story

D.H. is a female patient in her late forties. She has severe retinopathy and has been out of work for ten years due to her ill health. She has known Michele Smith, Diabetes Educator and Health Link Care Coordinator, for thirteen years through the Diabetes Education Clinic. Given this past clinical relationship, D.H. feels she has a “good comfortability level” with Michele.

Given this history and knowing that D.H. matched the Health Links profile, Michele reached out to D.H. to engage her in the Health Links approach. D.H. was very interested, as she was struggling to cope with her failing eyesight. Her Health Link goals included dealing with her depression and social isolation by linking her to a counsellor and helping her find some meaningful volunteer work. During her time as a Health Link patient, D.H.'s family doctor shut down their clinical practice, and so Michele also helped D.H. secure a new doctor.

In speaking with D.H, she said Health Links made a difference and that she is so glad that Michele reached out. She was in a difficult position and it “*touched her heart*” to have Michele support her working through her issues. Health Links is “*more personable, more personal*”. Michele “*knows me...I was frustrated with my diabetes which I can't control...*” The Health Link approach wasn't to “*stick me with more needles, but to get me out of the house. To get me back to being 'ME'...*”

*I want to thank you for everything that you have done. I saw Dr. XXXX today. What an amazing man! He is already trying to put me into programs with other disabled people and what have. You will never know how much I appreciate what you have done Michele.
Thank you so very much!*

D. H. May 18, 2018

D.H. spoke very highly of the Carefor Palliative Care course that she enrolled in as part of her Health Link goals. Participating in the weekly volunteer training “gave me a sense of purpose and helped me get out of the bed in the morning.” She has been a client of the Carefor medical transportation program for the past ten years and D.H. feels that volunteering as a Carefor friendly visitor will be “a way to give back”



Implementing the Health Link Approach

At its essence, Health Links can be simple. It is linking a patient to existing services to help them reach the goals they set, rather than serving them based on the diagnoses they may receive.

However, implementing the Health Link approach can be difficult. Identifying and successfully engaging a patient can be a challenge for a front line clinician who is accustomed to a more diagnosis-based approach. Navigation is more than just knowing to whom one can refer; one must also be aware of the rules of various health care and other government programs and how they intersect with and sometimes contradict each other. Care coordinators must **convince health care providers to work differently** within the same structures and with the same resources.



Challenging? Yes. Rewarding? Yes.

Creating a better connected, more client driven system? Win!

Health Link Team Welcomes Robin Lowry

Michele Smith will be overseeing the Western Champlain Health Link coaching team. Her goal is to ensure that everyone in a coordinator role has the resources and supports they need. Her team consists of Sabrina Martin in the North Lanark area; Gaby Hagan in the Kemptville area; Meghan Campbell with Mental Health Services Renfrew County and our newest coach hire, Robin Lowry. Robin is an experienced nurse with many years in the homecare sector. Robin will be primarily coaching in the Barry's Bay area and can be reached by email. Welcome Robin!

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Randomized Coffee Trials Testimonial

"I recently joined the Random Coffee Trial, my pairing was with a physician from a local Family Health Team. I highly recommend anyone given the opportunity to participate to do so as it is an excellent way to reveal links within our healthcare community that can build towards future collaboration opportunities. The conversation doesn't have to be all business and we definitely got to know each other a little. We're planning to meet for another coffee soon." *Matthew Neadow, Director, Information Technology Pembroke Regional Hospital*

