

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2017

Planning programs for equitable access to care Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic **Primary Care Low Back Pain Pilot**



In serving as one of the seven sites for Ontario's Low Back Pain Primary Care Pilot, Belleville Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic collaborated with musculoskeletal experts to improve patient outcomes. The program broke new ground because, while low back pain is common, there's generally no interprofessional care for it.

Not only did the pilot project improve patients' health, it benefited the clinic in several unexpected ways, including strengthening interprofessional collaborations; offering care to those who couldn't afford it otherwise; creating a partnership with Quinte West Community Health Centre (CHC) that led to a pilot expansion; and paving the way for comprehensive patient co-management of other conditions.

In the pilot, most patients are part of Ontario Works or people who receive provincial disability support payments, and there is also a high incidence of opioid use within the broader LHIN. Thanks to the free pilot program, patients reported being able to access care they otherwise wouldn't be able to and noted significant improvements in pain, mobility and quality of life.

More than 80 per cent of patients reported less of a reliance on medications, including opioids, to help manage their back pain, and a number expressed satisfaction with the holistic approach to care. One patient noted, "They're looking at me as a whole piece, not just fixing [a part of me]. They're trying to see what they can do to help me be better as a whole." There was also a decrease in emergency room visits and in referrals for diagnostic imaging. It was a win-win situation for the patients and the healthcare system.

The pilot underwent rigorous evaluation that involved patients, who were interviewed and surveyed regularly. The clinic has shared the evaluation with the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and is disseminating its findings through conference presentations and posters. Its expansion of the pilot through a partnership developed with the Quinte West CHC is strong evidence that the program was a success worth continuing.

Key Facts:

- 80% of patients report less reliance on medications, including opioids
- Decrease in ER visits and diagnostic tests
- Spreading pilot through partnership with local CHC
- Strong qualitative and quantitative data detailing outcomes
- Well-designed program