

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD


2013

**Improving Care for Seniors
Award Winner - Markham Family Health Team**

Aging at Home Program Memory Clinics



Every year, the Markham Family Health Team sends letters reminding patients in its Aging at Home program about flu immunization. The letters offered a great opportunity to invite patients to attend a memory clinic and take a Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) test. Coupling these two reminders let the Markham team reach more than 3,000 patients who might be at risk of memory loss, and proved to be a highly effective way to assess many seniors quickly.

Patients who got that first round of invitations were so keen to have their memory tested there was a waiting list, and a second clinic day had to be scheduled (as a result, memory clinics are now held annually). Organizing memory clinics meant patients got a standardized test quickly and efficiently. Those who were faced with confirmation of a memory issue got the news in the non-threatening environment where they usually get care — with the Aging at Home team there to assure them their regular provider would be sent the results and to tell them about services available. Family members who accompanied patients were relieved to hear on the spot about action that could be taken.

From the health team's point of view, the clinic approach to memory testing maximized the number of patients who could be tested. Overall, about 11 patients were tested per hour; only two or three per hour could have been done through formal appointments. But efficiency was not the only consideration. The memory clinics were designed with quality care as their central focus; specialist Aging at Home team members (a physician, a registered nurse, a social worker, a pharmacist and an occupational therapist) are the clinicians best qualified to do the tests and provide objective assessments. However, memory clinics could be done by other family health teams, even without specialists in aging at home.