

**BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD**

  
2014

**Team collaboration in patient-centred care**  
**Sunnybrook Academic Family Health Team – Homebound Senior’s Program**

**Taking care back home: broadening the use of house calls to protect frail patients**

House calls, once deeply out of fashion, have recently been seen as a safe and sensible way to care for frail seniors — people for whom even a short trip for healthcare can pose hazards.



But the resurgence of house calls presents some problems. Twenty-first century healthcare organizations aren’t designed to have providers wandering around town, so house calls are often done after hours, on a doctor’s own time. And that informal approach makes it difficult to involve other healthcare providers, or train students.

The winner of this Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario’s Bright Lights Award for team collaboration, the Sunnybrook Academic Family Health Team, tackled those problems. It decided to formalize house calls into a program for homebound seniors. Now, a variety of different healthcare providers do house calls, ensuring frail seniors get the full range of care they need — and students of all types get the chance to go along.

The Homebound Seniors Program treats house calls as part of the regular work day, with bookings managed by a registered nurse and different members of the team visiting patients where they live. In the two years before the program started, Sunnybrook FHT physicians made 296 home visits. In the two years after it was launched, that number increased to 414, a 40 per-cent increase. From March 2013 to June 2014, visits by medical residents increased by 79 per cent.

The Sunnybrook team are working on improving the program with regular evaluations. They’ve created a comprehensive “house calls bag,” and are working on building a symptom management kit, with medications commonly needed for seniors in crisis. There are also monthly homebound senior rounds, attended by the interprofessional team members and the geriatrician who acts as the consultant for the team.

The program is getting a positive response from providers and patients. Students surveyed said the program had increased their knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence. (Most planned to include house calls in their practices in the future). A member of the Sunnybrook Academic Family Health Team will be sent to the Institute for Health Improvement Conference on March 15-17, 2015, in Dallas, Texas by the sponsor of this award category, Boehringer Ingelheim.