

Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy - Self Assessment North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN and Provincial Results

The North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network (NSM LHIN) is currently participating in the Ontario Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy (SFHS). Focusing on seniors' health is a natural fit for NSM. On average 67% of total hospital days and 84% of alternate level of care (ALC) days are attributable to seniors. A substantial body of evidence shows that the hospital stay itself puts seniors at risk of complications and loss of functional ability, thereby contributing to longer lengths of stay and ALC days.

The Ontario Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy is designed to inform hospital leaders about how to modify the organization and provision of care to older patients. In the winter of 2011 each NSM hospital completed the SFHS self assessment tool and provided the regional geriatric program of Toronto with a 'snap shot' of senior friendly care at that time. Results from these surveys were included in the NSM assessment report and in the provincial report which compared the results from all participating LHINs. Both reports were prepared by the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto and both reports provide extensive information and ideas. This article will briefly highlight some of the comments made in the reports.

NSM LHIN Report Highlights

Four of the six hospitals in NSM have incorporated senior friendly goals within their strategic plans, and have designated a senior executive lead. Educational initiatives like orientation programs and in-house champion programs support the development of geriatric focused skills in some organizations. Protocols and monitoring procedures for things like falls, pressure ulcers and restraint use are commonly available and used. Protocols and monitoring procedures for other areas like delirium, continence, prevention of de-conditioning are not used consistently in all organizations.

Specialized transition roles that assist in developing continuity in patient care plans when transferring from the hospital into the community have been successful in supporting patient discharge. Aspects of the physical environment were cited by nearly all NSM LHIN hospital organizations as creating barriers to the provision of senior friendly care. Three organizations have conducted audits of their physical spaces utilizing senior friendly resources.

Provincial Report Highlights

The provincial report highlights three areas of focus for organizations across the province: functional decline; delirium; and transitions. In each of these areas hospitals are encouraged to focus on screening, management and monitoring/evaluation. The report calls for hospitals to establish a commitment with their board of directors to the senior friendly framework, designate a senior executive lead and ensure that seniors care is represented on the quality and safety committee. The report also suggests that hospitals develop geriatric champions who will provide peer to peer coaching and reinforcement of best practices.

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The provincial report suggests that education should be conducted for staff during orientation and at regular intervals topics should include sensitivity training, diversity awareness, aging and person focused care. All hospitals should ensure the availability of an ethicist or ethics committee. Each hospital will assess and audit their physical environments using senior friendly design resources and review equipment purchases to support patient safety.

North Simcoe Muskoka Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy Task Force Highlights

The North Simcoe Muskoka SFHS task force has reviewed both the LHIN specific report as well as the provincial report. The team has made a commitment to begin our work by reviewing and reducing functional decline in our organizations. For each hospital in NSM this may mean something different. For example in one organization it may mean the introduction of a screening tool to help staff identify patients at risk for functional decline. In another it might mean the creation of a new program to help improve patient mobility and ambulation. Each hospital will identify the strategy that makes the most sense for them.

Other task force activities include the creation of a document specific to the criteria for physical design and redevelopment. Using Senior Friendly tools the task force will provide each hospital with the information required to complete regular physical audits and help guide decision making when purchasing new equipment and furniture. NSM hospitals are currently establishing Senior Friendly committees in an effort to develop internal structures to continue to move Senior Friendly initiatives forward.

There is no shortage of work to be done and the SFHS task force of NSM is committed to working together to improve seniors care across our LHIN.

For more information or questions on the activities of the SFHS task force please contact

Ryan Miller, RN, MN, GNC(c)

Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy Coordinator

North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

705-325-2201 x 3840

Copies of the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN report as well as the provincial report can be found on the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto Web site at <http://rgp.toronto.on.ca/>