

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS

2021

COUCHICHING FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

**Award: Integrated care for older adults living
with complex health conditions**

Achievement: Integration of services for frail seniors in the Couchiching region



Although both Couchiching Family Health Team (CFHT) and Specialized Geriatric Services (SGS) at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health provided access to geriatric assessments and treatment to seniors in the Couchiching region, neither organization had the funding for a full complement of the necessary clinicians to comprehensively assess and treat frail seniors. So, they decided to pool their services to provide this service.

With the integration, there is a single-entry point for all seniors in the region to access assessment and treatment, handled by Waypoint, and anyone can refer a frail senior for treatment. Together, they provide access to a full complement of healthcare providers, including RNs, RPNs, Occupational Therapists, Nurse Practitioner, Physiotherapists, and a Geriatric Psychiatrist. The team assesses and treats the frail senior and works to connect them with core senior's services in the community to augment their work.

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After CFHT and SGS presented the program to Couchiching Ontario Health Team (COHT), over 15 different organizations offered to partner with them. CFHT and SGS also sought input from COHT's patient and family advisory council as they created the program.

A care coordinator, provided by Home and Community Care (HCC), is assigned to every frail senior as soon as they enter the program and follows them throughout and after transition. There is a monthly transition meeting so the care coordinators can present their clients (who were former clients of the program) for re-evaluation. This allows for seamless transition from the program and back should the need arise.

CFHT and SGS have learned that it is possible to merge services in a seamless way. What matters is having an attitude of 'anything is possible' and a fluid, flexible, and patient-centered outlook.

Given the success of the program, COHT is looking toward integrating the palliative care services in the Couchiching region.

Key Facts:

- One Door for All, patient-centred approach created a seamless, accessible program for all frail seniors
- Reduction in wait times from nine months to six
- Care team keeps patients moving through program
- Geriatrician, who was shared between the two programs, can now streamline work, and avoid duplication
- Program's success has led to discussions about merging palliative care services