

THE PETROLIA FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

On December 11, 2009 the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care announced funding for a Family Health Team that will serve Petrolia and Rural Lambton County. The Family Health Team came about as a result of an application submitted to the Ministry by local doctors with the support of the Town of Petrolia, surrounding municipalities, the CEE Hospital Foundation, Bluewater Health and countless health-related organizations. The Family Health Team will be in operation in 2011.

A Family Health Team, in tandem with our hospital, will form the foundation of a comprehensive and effective health care system for the residents of our community.

"This is by far one of the most exciting announcements for our community in many years. A Family Health Team will ensure the provision of a wide range of services close to home and the future viability of CEE Hospital. Our community is extremely fortunate to have received such vital support from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care."

*John McCharles,
Mayor of Petrolia*

"The development of a Family Health Team will help in the attraction of new doctors to our area in a way that will have a profound effect on the Health Care options for the residents of Central Lambton County. The availability of quality health care services in the community will help to attract new investment and job opportunities to the area as well as improve the health of our current residents."

*Jim Burns,
Mayor of Enniskillen*

"We envision a 'Made-in Lambton' health care system designed by our doctors, health care professionals and the public that will meet the extraordinary needs of our community. We believe that a Family Health Team represents unique opportunities to strengthen Petrolia and rural Lambton County's connection to CEE Hospital."

Charlotte's Task Force for Rural Health

"Over the past 10 years the Government of Ontario has systematically cut deeply into hospital budgets, directing hospitals to discharge community services and focus only on acute hospital care. However, in conjunction with the Ontario Medical Association, it has created new community-based health delivery models to compensate for that. Most family doctors in Ontario are now training in this model, and it is what they are looking for when they are looking for a community to practice in."

Of the existing models, it is my belief that the Family Health Team offers the most opportunity to Petrolia and rural Lambton County. If implemented properly, it will bring hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in direct investment to the community, it will return services lost through hospital cuts, and it should allow us to enhance those services to be even better than they were in the past. Furthermore, new community-based services that Petrolia has never had will be created."

Dr. John Butler

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A FAMILY HEALTH TEAM?

A Family Health Team (FHT) is a dynamic and innovative way to deliver primary health care to a community. It will include our doctors and is designed to give those doctors, and their patients, support from health care professionals such as nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, mental health workers and other allied professionals, each utilizing their experience and skills so that we receive the very best care when we need it and as close to home as possible.

WHAT IS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE?

Primary Health Care refers to a patient's first point of contact with a doctor or health care team. Studies show that countries with strong "primary care" systems have healthier populations and are able to use health care resources more efficiently. Primary care includes, but is not limited to: disease management and prevention; disease cure; rehabilitation; palliative care, and health promotion.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A FAMILY HEALTH TEAM TO PETROLIA AND RURAL LAMBTON COUNTY?

There are many advantages to the Rural Lambton community including:

- The Family Health Team will help the community to attract new doctors. Newly graduating doctors want to be part of a team approach to health care, and our FHT will be exactly what they are seeking. By having more doctors in our community, willing to serve at CEE Hospital, we ensure the long term viability of CEEH.
- The FHT will be locally governed by a board made up of our doctors, community representatives and health care professionals, and will be independent of Bluewater Health and the Erie St. Clair LHIN.
- An FHT will guarantee us a meaningful role and greater independence in the decision-making process. Monies for the FHT will come directly from the Ministry and not through Bluewater Health or the Erie St. Clair LHIN.

- The FHT will bring back services to our community. We have an opportunity not only to bring back what we have lost but also to enhance current services and generate new ones. For example, instead of one social worker we could have a team of mental health professionals.
- The composition of FHTs varies according to the communities which they serve. Every FHT is different and reflects the needs of its community. However, all FHTs have core health care professionals including doctors, nurse practioners and nurses. We have an opportunity to create a model for primary care that deals with the needs of this community as determined *by* this community.
- The FHT will ensure advanced and more efficient services within our community.
- An FHT will give our doctors expanded opportunities to work with the Schulich School of Medicine (University of Western Ontario) and McMaster School of Medicine, both of which supported our FHT application.

WHAT IS A NURSE PRACTITIONER?

A Nurse Practitioner (NP) is a Registered Nurse with additional education to prepare her/him for advanced nursing practice in the provision of primary health care to individuals, families and communities. NPs have advanced knowledge and decision making skills in health assessment, diagnosis, medications, health care management and community development. They work collaboratively with Family Doctors in the total care of patients in a primary care setting.

WILL I BE ABLE TO KEEP MY OWN DOCTOR?

Yes. Doctors will continue to have their own "roster" of patients.

I AM WITHOUT A DOCTOR, WILL A FAMILY HEALTH TEAM SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

A Family Health Team will help resolve this ongoing problem. Our Family Health Team has been approved for 14 doctors (there are currently seven doctors attached to our Family Health Team) and 6-8 allied professionals who will support the doctors.

WILL THE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM REPLACE THE HOSPITAL OR ITS EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

No. In fact, the FHT will enhance the need for the hospital and the Emergency Department. The additional doctors on the FHT team will provide the necessary coverage for both in-patient beds and the Emergency Department.

The Family Health Team could strengthen the hospital by partnering with it in a contractual way for things like space, diagnostic services and emergency services.

WHERE WILL THE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM BE LOCATED?

A committee made up of doctors, health care professionals, municipal leaders, and community representatives will look at options over the next several months.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO HAVE A FAMILY HEALTH TEAM IN OPERATION?

The process for developing the Family Health Team can take up to two years, but work has already begun. A steering committee has been formed that will create a business plan for current and future needs. Team members will be added going forward as needs are identified.

HOW WILL THIS PLAN BE PAID FOR?

The Ministry of Health will provide funding to the Family Health Team to assist in the development of a governance structure; preparation of bylaws; preparation of a business plan.

These funds can be used to retain a consultant who will assist the FHT in developing its plan. The Ministry will also provide funding for the hiring of administrative staff to assist in the ongoing operation of the FHT.

This is one of the few programs operated by the Ministry of Health in which funding is provided for the organization of the new program and to assist in getting the FHT up and operational in the early stages. Experienced consultants are available to assist in this process and other FHTs that are currently operating are prepared to assist new FHTs in the early stages.

There are also two Provincial organizations comprised of FHTs that offer education programs and draft documentation to assist new FHTs.

WHERE WILL THE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM BE LOCATED?

A Family Health Team is best served where all doctors and allied health professionals can work collaboratively in one location. Space allocation will be a part of the business planning and development processes.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

We will update this page as information becomes available. There are related sites which may also be of help to you. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website will give you additional information (www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/fht/fhtunderstanding.html). If you'd like to see a Family Health Team that has been in operation for a few years, you may want to visit the Maitland Valley Family Health Team site (www.mvfht.ca).