

## Subacute 9C Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre

In a year where everyone has strived to meet targets and quality care measures, the Subacute Unit at the Edmonton General has played a key role in helping Covenant Health achieve these goals.

“The staff on the Subacute Unit at the Edmonton General is invaluable,” said Jocelyn Smith, RN and Community Bed Hub Coordinator for Alberta Health Services. “Everyday, this team helps me get clients into the Subacute Unit promptly and efficiently from other acute care sites. This in turn supports the acute sites in assisting those who require that intensive setting and allows for the non-acute client to begin rehabilitation and convalescence.”

The 30-member team on 9C is made up of HCAs, a unit clerk, housekeepers, LPNs, RNs, a PT and an OT (and their assistants) pharmacy and a discharge coordinator. Together, they have cared for over 310 patients with kindness, competency and compassion for helping those in need.

“This team truly lives the vision of our founders where we do what we can for marginalized members of society with dignity and respect,” said unit manager Fedumo Robinson. “Located in the heart of the city, the Edmonton General often provides subacute care for people with complex health care needs who have very few resources.”

This small but resourceful team combines efforts and networks to meet the needs of every single patient that comes through the door. Whether the need is extensive rehab, or mental health services, helping a patient find housing, addictions counselling, or appropriate wound care, this team reaches for the bar and excels every time.

Yet, the care for patients isn't restricted to those in the city center. In addition to serving those from throughout the Edmonton area, this subacute team is the only unit that cares for patients from as far away as the Northwest Territories.

They collaborate and innovate on care discharge to their home communities all along the way. Allison Hermanns, Manager of Special Programs for Integrated Facility Living, Seniors Health at AHS, notes that some of the success of this team is also related to care planning and contingency planning prior to the patient's arrival. The unit tries to stop the cycle by working with specialists to see patients in clinic rather than sending them back through emergency departments. Another key to success is that staff honour diversity in a way to finding the most appropriate place to discharge patients, even when there's no 'traditional' home to go to.

Through cooperation and teamwork this unit is part of the solution by reducing congestion in acute care facilities in a timely manner.

## Annette Stegehuis Health Care Aide Youville Home, St. Albert

Whether it's pinning back the curtain so a resident doesn't have to sit all afternoon with the sun in their eyes, playing the piano at lunch time or taking a resident's glasses to be fixed, Annette Stegehuis' care and collaboration with others is extraordinary.

As one resident put it, "Annette is so wonderful she's going straight to heaven!"

Annette is an advocate for her residents, and her heart sees each resident as a whole person and how it all fits together in their physical, mental and spiritual needs. By getting to know each resident, she better meets the needs of residents.

"I know one of the residents really likes to look at recipes so I clipped some out of a magazine at home and brought them in for her to read. Or often I'll go to the library and sign out music for our residents who really enjoy music - particularly their favourite singer."

And many times, Annette will do little errands for them like, buy them Vaseline or a certain kind of tissue or treat that they like.

"I do it because I can," said Annette.

One thing that took a bit of effort for Annette was to bring in a rabbit for the residents to care for.

"We had one resident who was so depressed for many years, she never even came out of her room," said Annette. "After making all the appropriate arrangements and permissions, the resident now takes care of Sarge and she is so happy because she has a purpose in life now."

The resident feeds the rabbit, cleans the rabbit's cage every day, and she even harnesses Sarge up and takes him for a walk through the facility every day.

Annette always talks to her patients, even if their condition prevents them from being in the moment. Nominated by the family member of a resident, Mrs. Rooney says Annette deserves to be considered for all nomination categories as she is "compassionate with residents, respectful of residents, coworkers and families and has integrity in all she does."

## Brenda Robinson Health Records Coding Specialist St. Joseph's General Hospital, Vegreville

Brenda Robinson not only enjoys her work in health records, she loves the work she does that improves the community spirit of St. Joseph's General Hospital. As a primary leader in the facility's Healthy Workplaces Committee, Brenda actively looks out for and cares for her coworkers as much as they care for the patients they serve.

"If there were ever a Mission Award for patience and persistence, Brenda Robinson would win the honour," said Chaplain Ralph Warnock. "When others would give up or get frustrated, Brenda continues to pursue opportunities that would benefit the staff,"

In a smaller facility with a very busy workload, Brenda knows it's important to also take the time to get to know one another throughout the hospital. She enjoys her work to make St. Joseph's General Hospital a healthier workplace.

"Most of us spend more time at work than at home, so it's important that we enjoy it," said Brenda.

One of her favourite projects was the courtyard project. Everyone chipped in to transform the space between the buildings into a beautiful outdoor area where staff can go on their breaks to enjoy some fresh air and catch up with one another. These projects give staff a chance to get to know each other on a different level rather than in a formal work setting.

In addition to her regular job and the various activities, Brenda produces a quarterly newsletter that goes out with the paystubs. The newsletter takes a lot of collaboration; every area can submit content for each issue and she's developed a system with the mailroom for ensuring each staff member gets a copy. She also plans special games, crafts and contests to build a hospital community where people feel comfortable with each other, connecting and creating friendships.

"Brenda's a natural at it," said Manager Charlotte Ewanowich, speaking of Brenda's ability to plan activities that bring people together.

## Charlene Dibben Administrative Assistant St. Therese Villa, Lethbridge

When asked if she has a moment to share a few examples about how Charlene collaborates for the betterment of the residents, facility and the organization, Pat Newton from St. Michael's quickly says "sure, I'd do anything for Charlene."

It's that willingness that best illustrates Charlene's ability to live our mission, vision, values and the importance of bringing people together to serve and support others.

Charlene began her career with St. Therese Villa at an integral time, when the doors opened and it became the key designated assisted living facility it is today. At that time, Charlene became the face of St. Therese's, because she's the first person residents, family members and staff meet when they come to the Villa.

With a cheerful greeting and friendly smile, Charlene quickly got to know the 200 residents and over 150 staff members by name. As Charlene said "I love what I do, and I really like the residents and the people I work with." She not only knows their residents names and their family members, she also knows what's important to them. Colleagues applaud her ability to make people feel welcome and at home. Her way with staff and residents makes people feel valued and supported, said a coworker.

Charlene willingly assists her team members with anything they need. She made efforts to enlist others and took the time to train new unit clerks to understand most aspects of her job if she's away, and she assists the scheduling team with covering shifts. This is not an assigned task, but her sweet yet direct demeanour, combined with her rapport with people, makes her a great scheduler.

She easily collaborates with other members of the team and has a 'do whatever it takes' attitude. "Even though I don't work at St. Theresa's" said Pat, "Charlene is so approachable, I would have no concerns calling and asking her for her help with something,"

Pat tells of a time when Charlene naturally checked in with her manager long after the end of the day, before she left to go home, and genuinely asked if there was anything she needed. The manager was having trouble connecting some audio/visual equipment for a presentation the next morning, and Charlene was quick to offer to pick up the adaptor on the way home and bring it with her in the morning.

"She didn't just pay lip service asking if there was anything we needed after a long day, she meant it," said Pat. "She's young, vibrant, and a good problem-solver. I wish there were more people like her."

## Cindy Dodds Human Resources Corporate

Perhaps Cindy Dodds' key to successful collaboration begins with the fact that when she poses a question, it is open-ended. This often brings out the other person's perspective, ideas and solutions rather than leaving a yes or no option.

Reporting directly to the Vice President of Human Resources, Cindy juggles a lot of initiatives on a number of different levels throughout the organization.

Cindy's morning may begin with meetings about important professional association or union concerns, followed by a one-on-one meeting with her Vice President to move a project forward and end with collaborating with the Leaders' Forum planning committee to get keynote speakers for the event.

"The most enjoyable part of my job is working with the variety of people we do, on a local, provincial and even national level, as we aim to be the best health service provider in the province," said Cindy.

Cindy creates a refreshing environment for those around her to work with. She is an ideal model for collaborating, and when she offers to lend a hand, people want to pitch in and work hard right along with her.

"Cindy deals with ambiguity and change in a positive manner," said Johanna Knetting, Executive Associate to the President and CEO. "She not only sets the standard for a positive attitude and hard work when you are collaborating with her, but she is an inspiration for those around her to lead by example and set the same positive environment as they work with others."

Cindy's main project is the Leaders' Forum, where together with a committee of Vice Presidents, she is able to coordinate all the logistics, organize executives, and set up all the details of this annual event.

"The President's Office continues to receive glowing feedback from venue managers and their staff about what a dream Cindy is to work with when organizing a large event," added Johanna. "Even when she's coordinating VPs, she well is organized, leading them through the decision points of the meeting and ensures deadlines are met."

Cindy acknowledges that those tasks come easy when you have such excellent coworkers to work with. "Nothing can replace my coworkers," said Cindy.

## Maggie Jackson Nurse Practitioner, Primary Care Hospital Team Misericordia Community Hospital, Edmonton

The Misericordia Community Hospital's Primary Care Team, coordinated by Maggie Jackson, is built on a solid foundation of collaboration. The whole notion of primary care is about putting the right mix of healthcare support in place to care for and treat patients. Whether it is connecting with the physical therapist or touching base with the patients' pharmacy, Maggie synchronizes and implements the care plan for every patients she serves.

"Everyone has a role to play and everyone contributes to the care of the patient, relative to their mind, body and soul," said Maggie. "Without acknowledging that, we truly can't live the Covenant Health mission."

Maggie's collaboration is an essential part of her job, but she does it so effectively and so efficiently, it's just a normal course of practice. Nowadays, it's only when outside influences show her just how much she's made a difference by working together with her peers that she sees the real gains primary care has made through the years.

An example of Maggie's strategic teamwork occurred when a family had significant concerns about the care plan for their loved one which couldn't be resolved. Maggie called on patient relations, not as a last resort, but to come in a see if there was anything more that the primary care team could do or do differently to resolve the concern and gain the family's trust in the care that was being provided.

Nominated by her peers, they say Maggie's approach to patient care is collaborative and holistic. She is concerned about more than the medical issue and assesses the social concerns, family dynamics, environmental barriers, support systems and spiritual needs. Her holistic focus facilitates the best outcomes for the patient and caregiver.

Of all things Maggie does each day, she says she is most proud of the interdisciplinary team she works with and for being part of the vision of primary care from the beginning.

"Sure there were wrinkles along the way with tight resources or the inability to hire staff, but whenever we stop and choose what was best for the patients, those wrinkles sort themselves out," adds Maggie.

It is so nice to see that through a coordinated approach, everything can be ironed out.

## Margaret Johnson, RN Staff Nurse St. Joseph's General Hospital, Vegreville

Margaret Johnson didn't have to nurse for decades before she began to make a tremendous impact in the care of her patients, the facility, her community and the province.

Margaret's important work began shortly after one of the darkest periods for St. Joseph's General Hospital, when services were reduced in order to make changes to improve patient safety.

It was a time of great challenges and transition, and as a recent nursing grad, Margaret took the initiative to educate herself, and subsequently others, and set the highest stands for Infection Prevention and Control throughout the facility.

By collaborating with other regional health authorities, Margaret learned everything she could in order to control MRSA and VRE. She developed and implemented policies and procedures and then shared her knowledge with staff, patients and families, not only within the facility, but in the local community.

Margaret set up and now maintains all the resources required for proper infection prevention. She ensures all units have the most up-to-date information and manuals, and she equipped nursing units with properly stocked infection carts. She spearheaded the infection prevention signage throughout the hospital and led a team to set up hand disinfecting stations which are used by all who enter the hospital.

"What's most impressive about Margaret's ability to bring people together is that she took a leadership role, during a devastating time, for the betterment of patients," said Cindy Smook.

Margaret played a major role in collaborating with Covenant Health educators, administrators, and department heads to guarantee that the Accreditation Infection Guidelines were met. The Accreditation Committee noted that the "infection prevention and control program was thriving and that the awareness and practices at St. Joseph's General hospital was a glowing example of the Covenant Health Infection Prevention Control Program in action."

Margaret's coworkers say it is a privilege to work with her, and that her humility and gentle manner make it easy to live the mission and vision of collaborating for the benefit of patients and their families.

## Nutrition and Food Services Quality Improvement St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital, Edmonton

Although this team got off to a somewhat stilted start, they have truly shown what it takes to make a dramatic difference to mealtimes for residents at St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital. Made up of LPNs, RNs, dietary aides, health care attendants and dieticians, this team has changed the way meals are delivered in such a dynamic way as to blend resident, family, food services staff and nursing care staff to best serve our residents.

Using Covenant Health's mission, vision, and values as their compass, this team collaborated through differences with marked improvements to mealtimes.

"The difference is immeasurable," said dietician Kimberly MacRae. "It went from an experience where you're sitting by the noisy, busy, kitchen at a restaurant, to moving to a quiet table in a cosy corner."

Before the change, residents would be seated at the tables and be served based on their diet considerations. All the gluten-free plates were served, then all the diabetic plates, and so on. Dietary aides and health care attendants ran back and forth. Dessert was often on the tables first and it led to a very busy, noisy experience. Some residents would be done their dinner before others even started, and health care attendants went from table to table helping residents as they received their dinner. Food wasn't always hot when it arrived, and mistakes were easily made.

Today, residents are served by table with the first course arriving, followed by the second course and then dessert. Health care attendants can help one table at a time before moving to the next resident in need. There is less movement and less noise as people are no longer asking for things across a busy dining room.

"We really consulted dietary aides to find out a solution to ensure patients with special diets received the correct meal," said Kimberly, and the solution became a binder of menu information so aides don't have to memorize every resident's dietary needs. This means there are fewer mistakes and less clutter on the tables, as there is no need for large table cards indicating dietary needs and menus.

The results are astounding. This calm, peaceful environment is beneficial to many residents. The team also incorporated a new menu that meshes with a mixture of clinical, nutritional and creative flavours.

"I'm glad we took the time to do it right instead of fast," concluded Kimberly. "This process has confirmed what we've known all along: meals are not just a food services concern. There are clinical, nutritional and operational components that need to be addressed as well."

## Sheli Murphy VP Rural Health Services Corporate

For Sheli Murphy, collaboration and compassion go hand in hand: first seek to understand and then seek to be understood.

After years of progressive leadership in urban hospitals, Sheli was selected as the Vice President to support the rural facilities at Covenant Health. Having managed and lead teams in Edmonton, Sheli had the skills and compassion for her new role, but rural health care was new to her. She readily collaborated with staff, members of the local communities, physicians and board members to understand the unique characteristics and challenges of rural health.

“The physicians and staff in rural facilities do so much with such limited resources,” said Sheli. What is even more inspiring is that each caregiver knows almost everyone who walks through the door, which is quite different than urban hospitals where patients have more anonymity. Rural health professionals are ever mindful of these sensitivities to ensure patients and their families receive the best care possible.”

Sheli’s success “is in embracing the diversity that each rural site brings to the table in terms of strengths, and then celebrates those differences instead of painting everyone with the same brush,” said Lynn Lyseng, Director at St. Mary’s Hospital in Camrose.

And for Sheli, diversity is more about embracing different perspectives and not just the traditional acceptance of different cultures, genders or age.

Sheli’s talents for using everyone’s strengths are best illustrated in the stability her leadership has brought to facilities that faced hurdles and transitions. In just a short time, Sheli’s collaborative nature and quiet confidence have helped staff re-establish a sense of pride in their workplaces. In turn, these facilities have faith in Covenant Health and its leadership team.

Another key example of Sheli’s outstanding collaborative skills is her leadership in the development of the Rural Health Strategy. After consulting with staff, physicians, community leaders, Alberta Health Services staff, the local pharmacists, and even past board members of former health authorities, Sheli and her team didn’t just come up with one all-inclusive plan to address this strategy. Instead, they allowed the plans to develop and emerge as a representation of the communities, physicians, hospitals, management and staff (and sometimes culture) in each location.

When asked what her secret is, Sheli says “it all starts by listening - if you do that and report back what was heard, you can’t go wrong when you genuinely focus on the people, and caring for those we serve.”