

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **NE LHIN Goes the Distance for Northeastern Patients Using Telemedicine to Expand Connections to Care**

**October 16, 2014** – As a resident of a rural community in Northeastern Ontario, imagine a consultation with a distant specialist for a skin condition – without ever having to leave your home community. That’s happening now, and more often every day across our region, through a new technology called *teledermatology*.

Telemedicine provides patients health care options through telecommunications. The NE LHIN has the most active telemedicine sites of all LHINs at 300 – an amount which has expanded more than five-fold since 2007. “As a Northerner, I know that it isn’t always easy to access specialist care without having to spend time and money travelling,” said Louise Paquette, CEO of the North East LHIN. “Making better use of technology to deliver health care is our Northern ticket to increasing access to care closer to home.”

A record attendance of 200 Northern telemedicine coordinators, champions and experts attended this year’s telemedicine forum and learned that more than 146 million km of travel were avoided in Northern Ontario in 2013/14 thanks to the use of telemedicine, and that \$62 million in Northern health travel grants were not paid out because those patients had a telemedicine consultation.

The teledermatology session helped the providers understand how to establish a referring teledermatology practice and how to effectively use the teledermatology software. “The biggest concern with dermatologists is the quality of the pictures,” Lynne Kinuthia, Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) Regional Manager, told the 20 participants attending that session.



Getting camera practice in teledermatology to ensure quality images of skin conditions. Participants in the teledermatology session at the Northern Telemedicine Forum in North Bay included (left to right): Britt Woodruff, Powassan Family Health Team; Jan Hutchings, North Bay Regional Health Centre; Jennifer Mantha, NBRHC; Charlene Lalonde, North Simcoe FHT and Chigamik Community Health Centre; Jen Maxwell, Couchiching Family Health Team; Jennifer Cortez, Huron Shores Family Health Team. “Move information, not the patient” was the theme of the teledermatology session at the third Northern Telemedicine Forum, was jointly hosted by the North East LHIN, North West LHIN and North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, with the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN).

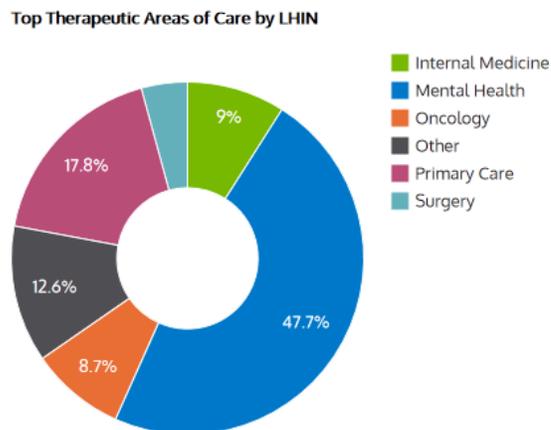
With that challenge to transmit quality images, Kinuthia had the health professionals practice how to take quality digital photos of moles and other skin conditions – by removing background, bracing their arms to steady the lens, etc. The photo is then uploaded and sent to a dermatologist to review and respond to the referring physician. With dermatological consultations in as little as five days, wait times or travel inconvenience to see a dermatologist are remarkably reduced.

For more information on how technology can further enhance care provided to Northerners, please contact the NE LHIN's Chief Information Officer, Tamara Shewciw ([tamara.shewciw@lhins.on.ca](mailto:tamara.shewciw@lhins.on.ca)).

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**Learn More:**

- Electronic health records and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) are key enablers to achieve health goals for Northerners within the 2013-2016 NE LHIN strategic plan.
- The top therapeutic areas of care for the NE LHIN in the first quarter of the 2014/15 year are shown below in Ontario Telemedicine Network statistics:



**For More Information:**

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