



Glenn Thibeault, MPP

Sudbury

New funding for North East LHIN Joint Assessment Centres: Now Connecting Northerners with Spinal Issues with Specialist Care

February 5, 2018 – Northerners with musculoskeletal back pain and other issues will soon benefit from better care coordination, which means shorter wait times to receive specialist care, closer to home. The North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) is expanding its successful North East Joint Assessment Centres (JACs) from their current focus on hips, knees and shoulder joints to also include musculoskeletal disorders affecting the spine thanks to new provincial funding.

“The health and well-being of the people of Sudbury has always been a top priority, and I am very pleased that even more help is coming to our community. This additional investment will reduce wait times, add more local specialists, and provide better care for everyone in Sudbury. I look forward to continuing to work with the North East Local Health Integration Network to improve healthcare in the North and to ensure that people no longer have to wait for essential surgeries like hip, knee and shoulder joint replacements,” said Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault.

The NE LHIN is receiving the following funding to support centralized intake through its JACs, as well as management and assessment of patients with musculoskeletal disorders including:

- \$511,581 in annualized base funding to implement the Inter-professional Spine Assessment and Education Clinic model for low back pain;
- More than \$250,000 in one-time funding spread over three years to support the work needed to expand the JACs program.

“We have put together a group of specialists from across the region to develop an Inter-professional spine assessment model so that Northerners receive quality care based on standardized best practices,” said Jeremy Stevenson, the CEO of the NE LHIN.

Currently, the region’s five North East JACs – located in Sudbury, Parry Sound, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins— help to ensure patients with hip, knee or shoulder problems are seen by an advance care physiotherapist. The physiotherapist would then perform an assessment and determine whether they are good candidates for joint surgery or would instead benefit from other types of interventions. People deemed eligible for surgery are connected with the next available surgeon for a consultation, and patients whose condition could stabilize and improve from other strategies are directed to alternate interventions.

“Our North East LHIN Joint Assessment Centres have helped to reduce Northerner’s wait times for hip, knee and shoulder joint replacement surgeries,” said Stevenson. “Thanks to their centralized intake, they’ve also resulted in more patients receiving their surgeries in a timely manner right here in Northeastern Ontario.”

Background:

- As of Dec 2017, on average Northerners now wait 110 days for hip replacements, and 131 days for knee replacements – an improvement from a previous high of 162 days and 203 days respectively.
- 77% of hip replacements and 77% of knee replacements are now done within the wait time target; however, with the provincial target of 90%, there is still work to do.
- In 2014, the NE LHIN added shoulder joint assessments to the JACs.

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