

Geriatric Clinic in North East LHIN Region's Far North

*Northern Geriatricians, Interdisciplinary Team and Ontario's Seniors' Strategy Lead
Provide Clinical Assessments*

January 16, 2014 – Further to months of planning by the North East LHIN with several partners, in the coming days a specialist team will return to Fort Albany on the James Bay Coast to conduct geriatric clinical assessments.

Between January 19 and 22, a team of visiting health care providers will collaborate with local providers on patient-focused clinics to assess 30 elders. Some of the assessments will be done in-home, with others held at the Fort Albany Hospital Wing (FAHW).

The team travelling north includes Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke, clinical lead of North East Specialized Geriatric Services (NESGS); Dr. Janet McElhaney, medical lead for senior care at Health Sciences North (Sudbury); Dr. Samir Sinha, Ontario's seniors' strategy lead; two NESGS geriatric nurse clinicians (Melissa Egan, Melissa Pretty) and Occupational Therapist (Kathryn Berardi); and Heather Cranney from the Red Cross.

Planning partners for the Fort Albany Geriatric Clinic include local care providers Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA), Peetabeck Health Services (PHS), and FAHW; the clinic team includes administrative and nursing staff from the WAHA, FAHW, and PHS home and community care programs.

The team has developed a geriatric assessment tool specifically for Aboriginal people, and will create individual care plans that local health care professionals can implement, with ongoing support provided through telemedicine appointments. In addition, the team will provide training to PHS and WAHA staff to aid in providing continuity of care beyond the life of the clinic.

This trip is the latest step in the collaborative efforts of the North East LHIN to increase access to care, especially for older adults living along the James and Hudson Bay coasts. In February 2013, LHIN CEO Louise Paquette travelled to the region with the Dr. Clarke, Dr. McElhaney, Dr. Sinha and the NE LHIN's Primary Care Lead, Dr. Alan McLean, to focus on the needs of older adults in very remote communities in Ontario's Far North.

"Recognizing that a community's health needs are best understood by the people who live there, this geriatric clinic is a follow up to what we heard as a LHIN when we visited the community one year ago," said CEO Louise Paquette. "The team will help us to determine ways and means to better care for people living in our region's most Northerly communities."

The North East LHIN has worked with the Red Cross to provide culturally appropriate Personal Support Worker training to support people living at home in Fort Albany and Moose Factory. The program, which began in December, now has 24 students enrolled and is pivotal to ensuring people receive appropriate follow-up care.

FACTS:

- Northeastern Ontario is home to two geriatricians – Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke and Dr. Janet McElhaney.
- Today, 19% of Northeastern Ontario’s population is aged 65 and over. That is higher than Ontario’s average, and is projected to increase to 30% by 2036.
- Since the publication of his report *Living Longer, Living Well* in December 2012, Dr. Sinha travelled to five James and Hudson Bay coast areas with the NE LHIN CEO, the two Northeastern geriatricians, and one physician in February 2013 to engage with the providers and elders as a means to determine what people needed to live healthy and well independently.
- The outcomes led to action – the NE LHIN responded with tangible items such as more foot care funding, a wheelchair for use in Peawanuck, two vans for patient transportation in Kashechewan and Attawapiskat, and now this geriatric clinic and culturally appropriate PSW training from the Red Cross to ensure proper follow up care is provided.

For more information, please contact: Kathleen Bain, Communications Officer, NE LHIN, at Kathleen.bain@lhins.on.ca or (705) 840-2340.