

COUNTY OF RENFREW PARAMEDIC SERVICE

AGING AT HOME PROGRAM

One of the current issues facing our health care system is the inappropriate use of Acute Care Beds in our hospitals. As a result of the increased number of patients waiting in hospitals for Long Term Care placement, more and more acute care beds are being occupied causing increased wait times and compromised management of trauma patients.

As a result of these challenges to our current Health Care System, the Ontario government launched the Aging at Home Strategy. The purpose is “to allow seniors to live with dignity and independence in their own homes”. The funding was given to the LHIN’s to establish programs to address the needs of seniors, allowing them to remain in their homes, in their community. One of these programs exists in the community of Deep River and involves a partnership between the Paramedic Service and the North Renfrew Long Term Care (NRLTC).

The Aging at Home Program currently consists of 32 clients (started with 16 clients) with an average age of 87, all of whom are still living at home independently.

The goals of the program are to enable seniors to remain in their homes, decrease 911 calls, decrease unnecessary ER visits, decrease hospital admission times, to improve the quality of life of our seniors and to help reduce the stress felt by the client’s family and caregivers. These goals are reached through various members of the team: housekeeping, maintenance, personal support workers and Paramedics.

While the Aging at Home program runs 24 hours a day, our current participation is from 1100-1900, four days a week. At the beginning of each shift, the paramedic reports to North Renfrew Long Term Care and utilizes the vehicle that is provided for the program. It is with this vehicle that clients can be transported to Deep River and District Hospital for appointments and non-emergency reasons. The paramedics also carry some equipment in the vehicle such as oxygen, symptom relief, cardiac monitor and trauma supplies, in the event of a client needing medical attention. The Paramedics are able to do first-response for our clients in the event that 911 is required or initiated.

The paramedic’s main goal is improving quality of life by preventing emergency calls, by identifying and removing hazards, ensuring medications are being taken correctly as prescribed by the client’s family physician, taking monthly vitals, collecting medical histories and educating the clients on their medical conditions.

Our professional goal is to increase our scope of practice to meet the needs of the clients in the program. The paramedic service is currently looking to expand the knowledge and scope of practice to include the following: Fall prevention and home safety assessment, urinalysis by dipstick, venipuncture, immunization, diabetic assessment, antibiotic administration, B12 injections, health promotion activities and much more.

It currently costs less to support residents in long-term care homes, however, there are very long waiting lists at each nursing home in the County of Renfrew. Also, most of these seniors would only require minimal assistance to be able to stay in their own homes. There are also many seniors staying in hospitals while they wait for either nursing home placement or extra community support. Until the provincial government directs funds to build and staff new long term care centres, we believe it is essential and more economical for them to assist residents with staying in their own home, which is where they want to be.