



For Edmonton COPD Patients, INSPIRED Offers “Model for the Future” of Care

In 2014, a few years after he was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Dave Knights of Edmonton was given three months to live. He has defied the odds, and gives some of the credit to the health support he has received at home. Dave receives home care and is supported in his home by an interdisciplinary team that includes a case manager, nurse practitioner, respiratory therapist and personal care. This team approach, which includes education about living with COPD, have been instrumental to his care and outlook .

“It has made a tremendous difference,” says Knights. “I’m not that easy to go down.”

Dave Knights

COPD includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema, where progressive lung damage makes breathing difficult. A conservative estimate finds that about 800,000 Canadians live with COPD.

People with advanced COPD, like Knights, are among the highest users of Canada’s hospital resources. For them, the interdisciplinary, coordinated care that is part of the INSPIRED approach is a vital support. The program, available in the Edmonton Zone of Alberta Health Services and a growing number of sites across Canada, equips patients with COPD by providing them with: coordinated discharge planning linking acute care teams with the family physician and home care; at-home self-management education and psychosocial support; written action plans for managing future infections; advance care planning; help to determine their goals of care; and immunization reviews when needed. All this takes place in the home.

In 2014-15, the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) supported 19 teams from healthcare organizations, including Alberta Health Services (Edmonton Zone), to adapt and adopt INSPIRED from Capital Health (now part of the Nova Scotia Health Authority), where it was developed. Of the 19 teams, only AHS Edmonton Zone approached the INSPIRED opportunity from a community perspective where clients were met in their homes by a team of professional there to assist with the management of their disease in the community and facilitating self-care and community supports to help address their advanced lung disease. CFHI is now expanding this innovative program, partnering with Alberta Health Services (Edmonton Zone) and five other health systems across the country to bring INSPIRED to an additional 2,300 people living with advanced COPD, in up to 39 hospitals and 13 primary healthcare organizations.

“For patients living with chronic illnesses such as COPD, delivering enhanced care in the community is the model for the future,” says Carol Anderson, Executive Director of Continuing Care Programs for Alberta Health Services, Edmonton Zone.

Of all the chronic diseases, COPD is the number one reason for hospitalizations in Canada, accounting for the largest number of hospital admissions from emergency departments and hospital readmissions.

“Those visits take a lot out of you physically and emotionally,” says Donna Stochinsky of Edmonton. Her late husband, Bucky, had COPD and passed away in June 2017. She says INSPIRED had a positive impact on his care and their stress. “He was happier at home, with a better quality of life,” says Stochinsky.



Donna Stochinsky

In 2014, Bucky was in and out of the hospital five times, for stays ranging from five days to a few weeks. After his Home Care case manager implemented the INSPIRED approach, a respiratory therapist came to their condo to do an assessment, and a nurse practitioner and a pulmonary physician provided assessment and care in the home. The case manager, respiratory therapist and nurse practitioner continued to visit regularly. That avoided not only hospitalizations but also routine visits to the doctor's office which are difficult for people with advanced COPD.

Although his condition deteriorated in 2017, and he did face some short hospital stays, the goal was always to return to the condo. With support, Bucky was able to spend the last 3½ months of his life at home.

An independent analysis showed that scaling up this type of COPD outreach to all Canadians who could benefit would save \$688 million in hospital costs over five years. For every \$1 invested in the program, \$21 in hospital-based costs could be prevented.

As Anderson indicated, the INSPIRED approach is appropriate for other chronic diseases. When they introduced the program in Edmonton, Alberta Health Services incorporated the INSPIRED interdisciplinary approach to support clients with other respiratory conditions/complications who could benefit from the model of care.

One of those patients was Brenda McLaughlin, who had multiple sclerosis (MS). She and her husband, Bob, met as teens and were married 42 years. Brenda, a teacher, was diagnosed with MS at 40, although the signs were there before that. She continued working until she was about 50, and died of pneumonia in 2017, age 63. Her lungs became extremely compromised, and she and Bob relied on visits by a nurse practitioner, physiotherapist and case manager. That assistance was a blessing, says her husband.

"I felt like we had somebody on our side," he says. "You want to keep as much normalcy as possible. Being at home was major."

For health services, shifting resources into the community provides person- and family-centred care that is appropriate and effective. "INSPIRED is one example of that," says Anderson.



Bob McLaughlin