

Case Study



Telemedicine improves quality of care; efficiency and capacity, while enhancing the quality of life for patients and staff.

Profile of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance Mental Health Services use of telemedicine

Sixteen years ago, Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance Mental Health Services (HPHAMHS) added telemedicine to its patient care toolkit. “Since then, telemedicine services have continued to improve and contribute to quality care,” says Program Director Penny Cardno.

HPHAMHS serves an area that stretches east 160 kilometers from Lake Huron and 180 kilometers from north to south across rolling farmland. Stratford, the largest urban community in the catchment area, has a population of about 32,000. Telemedicine brings together mental health and addiction health care practitioners from around the district efficiently and cost-effectively to serve this sparsely populated region. The specialists enrich multi-disciplinary care teams, thereby efficiently improving available services.

Telemedicine Applied: Improving crisis care

The Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team deliver care faster because OTN is available in hospitals and other health care facilities throughout Huron and Perth Counties. Mental health and addiction patients requiring immediate assessment in the middle of the night will soon be able to access specialists quickly by going to a telemedicine-enabled health care facility near them. They do not have to wait for a specialist to drive two hours to conduct an assessment in person.



The Bonus: Improving mental health care for seniors in Long Term Care

A number of Long Term Care (LTC) homes in Huron and Perth Counties are accessing OTN too. Should a telemedicine-enabled LTC home be closed due to an infectious disease outbreak, care and assessment of residents with mental health or addiction problems can continue uninterrupted. Quality of care is not compromised.

“Telemedicine streamlines administrative tasks as well.”

Health care professionals using telemedicine for assessment and follow-up care can see more patients, because no time is lost travelling, thereby , increasing overall capacity. The elimination of long distance travel also reduces stress for patients and health care practitioners, improving quality of life for all those involved.

Similarly, continuing education or meetings can be accessed through OTN, reducing associated travel costs and time lost owing to traffic or inclement weather.

“Outbreaks in Long Term Care homes do not compromise mental health care.”

Advice to New Users: Community cooperation leads to timely shared care.

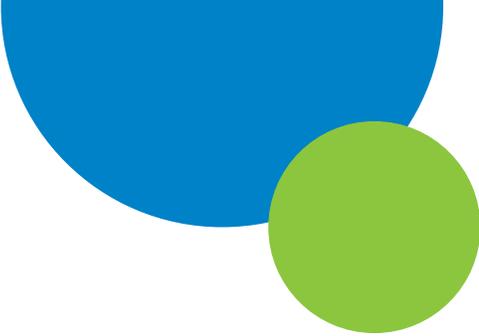
As an early adopter of telemedicine, HPHAMHS is a significant resource for practitioners of mental health and addiction. Ms. Cardno stresses that true success has been seen as a result of community cooperation. Telemedicine is most effective when emergency room personnel, long term care homes, and community stakeholders work together to deliver timely shared care for people with mental health or addiction issues.



Penny Cardno, Program Director

Penny Cardno is the Program Director of Complex Continuing Care, Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services with the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance. A co-chair of the Huron Perth Mental Health and Addiction Network, Penny is involved in the development of the Huron and Perth counties Health Links, and participates in a number of regional and district committees related to mental health and addiction services. A mental health advocate who has demonstrated leadership across the establishment of a wide variety of mental health programs, Penny has been a driving force in expanding the use of telemedicine to enhance access to care and the patient care experience. In 2013, Penny was honoured by the Ontario Psychiatric Association with the June Chamberlain award for her outstanding achievement in mental health in a General and/or Schedule 1 Hospital. Penny is a certified Canadian Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse with the Canadian Nursing Association and is presently working towards a combined BSCN/MSN degree at D'Youville College in Buffalo, New York.





Telemedicine for Your Health Care Practice

Telemedicine is secure, safe and reliable. Over a decade of use in Ontario has proven its effectiveness as a tool for specialist consults and continuing education.

Patients do not pay additional fees. Physicians may bill OHIP for telemedicine at a premium.

OTN is a recognized provider of healthcare distance education. That skill and experience is applied to all online telemedicine training modules.

As the world leader in telemedicine, OTN helps Ontario get more out of the healthcare system, bridging the distance of time and geography to bring more patients the care they need, where and when they need it. Using innovative technology OTN streamlines the health care process, while also expanding the way knowledge is shared and how the medical community interacts with each other and with patients. The efficiencies achieved help health care budgets go farther. Funded by the Government of Ontario, OTN is a not-for-profit organization. For more information, go to www.otn.ca