Manitoba Association of Personal Care Home Social Workers Recognized

The Manitoba Association of Personal Care Home Social Workers (MAPCHSW) was chosen by the Canadian Association of Social Workers to receive the Distinguished Service Award. This award was presented to the group at an award ceremony in Winnipeg in March of 2007.

The MAPCHSW was first formed in 1974. It includes members from across Manitoba who come together to share information, participate in professional development activities, and to advocate for system changes that enhance the lives of long term care residents.

WRHA Long Term Care Strategy

In Spring 2006, the Open Letter to Allied Health Practitioners provided an introduction to the WRHA Long Term Care Strategy. Announced by government in January 2006, this five year plan intends to create more affordable community living alternatives and expand supports so that people can live in their communities longer. For people who still need the care provided in Personal Care Homes, significant efforts are underway to create more single-bedrooms and improve the living environments for residents.

Since the announcement, work has moved forward in several areas of the Strategy. Sixteen additional supportive housing spaces have been added and 144 spaces are currently under construction. Discussions are underway for the development of more community housing options and enhanced services for people who requires specialized supports to live in the community. Examples include young people with disabilities, persons with acquired brain injuries, ventilator-dependent individuals and seniors with challenging behaviors. A model to provide enhanced supports for seniors within existing seniors blocks has been implemented, with plans to expand to a second site in April 2007.

For more information about the WRHA Long Term Care Strategy, visit www.wrha.mb.ca.

HSC Clown Specialist Receives Award

Child Life Specialist/Clown Specialist, David Langdon was the recipient of the 2006 Robo Award from the Longwoods Healthcare Board and Ontario Hospital Association on November 6, 2006. Therapeutic clowning in hospitals was pioneered at the Children’s Hospital in Winnipeg 20 years ago and was celebrated at its annual conference in Winnipeg last fall.
Medication Order Writing Standards

An underlying cause of serious, even fatal medication errors is the use of abbreviations and symbols. Illegible handwriting and incomplete medication orders are also contributing factors in medication errors. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) is implementing a Medication Order Writing Standards policy to address these issues.

The intent of the policy is to ensure that medication orders are clear, legible and unambiguous. Improving the accuracy of communication between health care workers involved in the provision of medications will ultimately lead to improved patient safety. The policy includes a list of “Banned Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols”. This list has been derived from medication errors causing harm to patients.


A recent baseline audit of 10 WRHA facilities has shown that approximately 1% of prescriptions are not legible, 44% of orders are incomplete and 26% contain banned abbreviations. An awareness and education campaign for the Medication Order Writing Standards policy will be undertaken this spring, followed by a repeat audit in the summer of 2007. Enforcement of the policy is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2007.

Eliminating known, dangerous abbreviations, symbols and acronyms is an example of a medication safety initiative that can immediately improve comprehension of medication orders and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation leading to errors. It is an initiative that can involve all health care workers, emphasizing the importance of clear communication, and demonstrating the value of learning from reported medication errors.

For further information, please contact Lora Jaye Gray, Project Pharmacist at 926-7136 or lgray@hsc.mb.ca.

Integration of Clinical Nutrition Services

WRHA Nutrition and Food Services has received approval from Senior Management to regionalize and fully integrate Clinical Nutrition Services across the region effective April 1, 2007. The employer of record for the Clinical Dietitian staff involved will remain unchanged. Clinical Dietitians will report to WRHA Nutrition and Food Services with strong operational linkage, as multi-disciplinary team members, with the associated clinical program team. Benefits of this new reporting structure include:

- A clear, direct reporting relationship with WRHA Nutrition and Food Services facilitates integration of best practice across the region.
- Provides for more equitable distribution of services across the continuum of care and across sites.
- Provides for equitable access to resources for dietitians.
- Facilitates provision of client-centred nutrition services across the region.
- Provides leadership for Registered Dietitians, new services, and increases the mobility of nutrition services between sites or service areas.
- Ensures that Registered Dietitians are following agreed-upon Expert Review Group recommendations, diet compendium, practice standards, etc.

Over the next fiscal year, the implementation will include Health Sciences Centre, Grace General Hospital, Victoria General Hospital, Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks General Hospital. Clinical Nutrition at Deer Lodge Centre is currently managed regionally. Discussions on a go-forward basis will take place with the PCH and community sectors, as well as the other sites in the hospital sector, to assess and identify opportunities for the regional management of clinical nutrition.
Integration of Pharmacy Services

In March 2007, WRHA Senior Management approved the integration of pharmacy staffing and services under the management of the Regional Pharmacy Program. Integration is intended to improve patient services by reducing duplication and improving opportunities for the sharing of resources. The integration of the Pharmacy Program is not a cost saving measure and all current pharmacy staff at the Health Sciences Centre, Concordia Hospital, Riverview Health Centre, Deer Lodge Centre, Victoria General Hospital, Grace Hospital and the Seven Oaks General Hospital will become employees of the WRHA. There will be no change in geographic location for staff at the time of transfer.

In 1998, a WRHA Regional Pharmacy Program was established with a matrix site/regional management structure. In 2004, the ABC Regional Pharmacy Project recommended that further integration of pharmacy services occur to realize efficiencies, improve patient services, and bring the structure and operations of the WRHA’s Regional Pharmacy Program in line with that in other regions throughout Manitoba and across the country. The WRHA has now decided to implement the ABC Project recommendations. The goal of a fully integrated Pharmacy Program is targeted for June 2007.

The Pharmacy Program is working with the Project Management Office to ensure a structured and systematic approach is taken to the Pharmacy services integration. A number of activities are underway to advance the integration process. These include:

- Meetings to inform staff about the integration process and to answer questions have been held at all sites. An electronic survey has been distributed to all Pharmacy staff to help identify any issues of concern that need to be addressed during the integration process, as well as to provide a baseline indication of staff perspectives and satisfaction related to a number of issues.
- A Human Resources transition team, composed of management and union representatives, has been formed to deal with HR issues that must be addressed to complete the integration process.
- The WRHA Pharmacy Services Managers have been meeting weekly with a facilitator to work through options for a new regionally-integrated organizational structure. Discussions have occurred with other regional health authorities from across the country to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of other models.
- A Pharmacist Advisory Council and a Pharmacy Technician Advisory Council are in the process of being established. Terms of reference have been developed and participating sites are electing their representatives.

For further information you may contact Kevin Hall, Regional Director Pharmacy Services at 926-7154 or khall@wrha.mb.ca.

Your Feedback

I am interested in hearing from you. If you have any questions feedback, please email me at info@wrha.mb.ca.

Sincerely,

Réal Cloutier
Vice President and Chief Allied Health Officer
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority