



Southwestern Ontario Rehabilitation Leaders Support Specialized Stroke Units

On May 30, rehabilitation program managers and their teams met with the SWO Stroke Strategy to discuss a direction for moving toward best practice and establishing specialized stroke rehabilitation units. The following agreement in principle was reached:

“Each district of the Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy will have at least one specialized stroke rehabilitation unit accessible by stroke survivors from that district.”

Background

- The Southwestern Ontario (SWO) Stroke Strategy facilitates, coordinates, implements and sustains the development of an integrated delivery system for best practice stroke care.
- Canadian best practice guidelines for stroke (available at www.canadianstrokestrategy.ca) and provincial standards (<http://profed.heartandstroke.ca>) recommend the creation of specialized stroke rehabilitation units (Evidence Level A/1).
- Within the ten counties of SWO, tremendous variation exists in access to best practice stroke rehabilitation. There are only two specialized stroke rehabilitation units and one integrated stroke unit in the region.
- Implementing specialized stroke rehabilitation units has the potential to save Ontario an estimated \$24 million per year according to the CIHR report, “A Blueprint for Stroke Rehabilitation: Improving Outcomes and Maximizing Efficiencies.”
- The Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy led the *Stroke Rehabilitation Action Planning Day* in November 2006 to generate consensus on strategic directions for moving stroke rehabilitation toward best practice for Southwestern Ontario. One of the top priorities identified was the creation of an **“access plan and navigation system for all residents of Southwestern Ontario ensuring timely access to best practice stroke rehabilitation.”**

Moving to Best Practice



Stroke Rehabilitation Units are a Best Practice and the Provincial Standard of Care

The creation of stroke units across our region is essential for achieving an effective, efficient, sustainable stroke rehabilitation system that will meet the needs of residents of SWO recovering from stroke.

- Specialized stroke units involve an interdisciplinary team, including specialist nursing staff, based in a discrete ward caring exclusively for stroke patients.¹
- Specialized stroke units are committed to meeting Ontario Stroke System Rehabilitation Consensus Panel standards.²
- Six to eight rehabilitation beds are considered the minimum critical mass for creation of such a unit.

Each stroke district (Windsor/Essex, Chatham/Kent, Sarnia/Lambton, Thames Valley, Huron Perth and Grey Bruce) drafted an action plan outlining the steps required to create a specialized stroke rehabilitation unit or integrated stroke unit for their district.

1. Adapted from "Organised inpatient (stroke unit) care for stroke (Review) 2007" Cochrane Stroke Unit Trialists' Collaboration

2. Ontario Stroke System Consensus Panel on the Stroke Rehabilitation System: "Time is Function," 2007

Moving Forward:

- ➡ Implementing action plans aimed at the creation of specialized stroke rehabilitation units.
- ➡ Partnering with the Erie St Clair and South West LHINs and provider organizations to support our vision and its incorporation within rehabilitation service planning.

"100% of the participants felt confident that activities from the meeting guided them in the direction of best practice stroke rehab care for stroke survivors in Southwestern Ontario."

For more information:
Deb Willems, Regional Rehabilitation Coordinator
(519) 685-4292 x42681 or deb.willems@lhsc.on.ca

