

# Together we can

## Complex Continuing Care



Imagine that you've spent the last few weeks in an acute care hospital after a severe stroke, unable to breathe, talk or walk on your own. With the help of a ventilator, your condition has stabilized and the need for life-saving treatment is past. Your biggest challenge now is regaining the function you need to return home and begin rebuilding your life. You're not sick enough for acute care, but your medical problems are still too complex for long-term care, and you're not functioning independently enough to manage community care. So where do you receive the quality care you need and deserve?

Providence Care's Complex Continuing Care Program at St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital is a comprehensive service for adults requiring 24-hour nursing care. Here, patients living with complex medical problems resulting from

an accident, or chronic illness – like a stroke, multiple sclerosis, Huntington's disease or ALS – receive compassionate care aimed at supporting and maintaining physical and mental function. The program at St. Mary's of the Lake includes 72 complex continuing care beds alongside a six-room unit for patients at the end-stage of life and four respite beds for patients whose families are in need of short-term respite.

Demand for complex continuing care in the region is growing steadily as our population ages. More people are living longer with chronic disease, and caregivers are battling growing demands on their time, abilities and resources. That said, Kingston's program is experiencing a drop in the average patient age – to 67, and patients are arriving at our hospitals with more complex medical needs than ever before.

### Redevelopment



The consolidation of Providence Care's St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital and Mental Health Services programs in a new building will provide patients with a more modern, fully accessible, therapeutic environment designed to enhance patient comfort and support rehabilitation and recovery. The current facilities are not appropriate for the needs of today's patients and clients, many of whom are recovering from a stroke or spinal cord injury, or living with complex physical health issues. The original buildings at St. Mary's of the Lake date back to the turn of the century, and don't easily accommodate today's wheelchairs and other mobility aids.

Providence Care's sprawling Mental Health Services site on King Street West was built in the 1950s. Its ward-style rooms spread across kilometres of stark concrete corridors are both inefficient to operate and unsuited to modern approaches to mental health care and recovery.

Our plan is to consolidate the programs from both sites in a brand new hospital on the King West site. New, efficient rehabilitation space for inpatients and outpatients will mean more people can benefit from post-surgical/accident or injury rehabilitation. Inpatient units will be grouped in neighbourhoods of



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smaller family-type clusters of eight to 10 beds with access to views of the surrounding landscape and to common areas.

## Equipment

It is a myth that the practice of complex continuing care involves little more than a bed, a lift and a wheelchair. This couldn't be further from the truth. Equipment ranging from specialized IV pumps to adjustable commode chairs, for patients who can't sit up, play a major role in ensuring the well-being and comfort of seriously ill patients of all ages and abilities.

Providence Care recently made a significant, multi-year commitment to replace every complex continuing care bed on a seven-year rotating basis. Valued at approximately \$18,000 each, the program's new, electronic beds are fully adjustable and include specialty mattresses for patients at risk for ulcers.

There is also an ongoing need for diagnostic equipment, including \$18,000 bladder scanners used to assess patients at risk for catheterization and \$4,000 vital

sign towers equipped with automatic blood pressure gauges and oximeters.

## Education

Every member of the Complex Continuing Care team is committed to ongoing education and training in the interests of improved patient care. Nurses specializing in complex continuing and palliative care benefited from a recent workshop on patient assessment that will help gauge the ability of patients to tackle challenging new tasks. Annual support from the palliative care endowment helps to send staff to major conferences and attract guest speakers on timely topics in palliative care.

A fund to provide relief time for nursing education, for example, will enable the program to retain on-call nursing staff to care for patients when full-time team members are on conference.

Other investments in education will help to realize the hospital's vision of delivering the active rehabilitation support required to move complex continuing care patients to the next level of care.

## Research

Complex continuing care physicians, nurses and staff are involved in collaborative research with both Queen's University and the Palliative Care Integration Project (PCIP), a collaboration among the region's palliative care groups. With practical input from Kingston's palliative care workers, PCIP developed a pain assessment model that is now standard practice among palliative and complex continuing care practitioners province-wide.

The Complex Continuing Care Program is also aggressively recruiting a nurse practitioner to deliver ongoing preventive patient care and oversee a clinical research initiative involving the benefits of the nurse practitioner model, a relatively new approach within continuing care. Additional research plans also include studies to measure the impact of enhanced rehabilitation initiatives on patients' functionality and well-being and how this could translate in shorter lengths of stay for patients.

## *Opportunities for giving*

- Unrestricted gifts to help the program  
*No minimum*
- Patient care equipment (list available)  
*\$1,000 - \$175,000*
- Send a nurse to a conference or training session  
*\$500 - \$3,000*
- Support on-site training session for clinical staff  
*\$2,000 - \$5,000*
- Invest in local hospital research  
*No minimum*

