

Backgrounder/ Communiqué

Erie St. Clair LHIN Concludes Study of Emergency Departments

January 26, 2010

The Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network (ESC LHIN) began the review of three small community hospital Emergency Departments in August, 2008. At that time, Hay Group Health Care Consulting performed an initial study that included: Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital Site, Bluewater Health (Petrolia); Leamington District Memorial Hospital; and, Sydenham Campus, Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (Wallaceburg).

The study reviewed operations and practices of the Emergency Departments to better understand the pressures reported in the areas of staffing, patient volumes and relationships with the larger urban and tertiary sites. The end goal of this study was to provide recommendations for the LHIN to consider for future planning in delivering quality, sustainable Emergency Department services. The Hay Group study was released in January, 2009, and identified issues that required further review and confirmation.

With the submission of the final Hay Group report, the ESC LHIN entered into a secondary review and consultation phase. In this phase, meetings were held with key stakeholders and the community to collect feedback and gain an understanding of the health care system issues faced in these communities. This work, along with other key pieces, was to lead to the submission of LHIN-endorsed recommendations to be considered by the Board of Directors in June, 2009.

With the announcement of the creation of the Rural and Northern Health Care Panel in April, 2009, by the Government of Ontario, the ESC LHIN Board of Directors passed a motion in May, 2009, deferring recommendations as originally planned. The Board further directed staff to complete their scheduled activities and planned work and report on the study's progress at upcoming Board meetings.

At the November 24, 2009, Open Board Meeting, a motion was made "that the ESC LHIN Board ask LHIN staff to bring forward a report of the work to date of the Small Community Hospital Emergency Department Study, with options at the January 26, 2010, Open Board Meeting."

Community Engagement and Review Summary

During the consultation and review phase, the ESC LHIN held engagement sessions with the public and stakeholder groups. These included more than 50 interviews with stakeholders representing a broad range of roles and experts within the health care system/community/leadership, and covering all three regions that make up Erie St. Clair. Additionally, nine public meetings were held in ESC LHIN communities. Groups engaged through this process were:

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- General public
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire and police services
- Physicians, nurses and administrators
- Municipal politicians and community leaders
- Walpole Island First Nations leadership
- Long-term care home administrators & clinical leads
- Family Health Teams and Community Health Centres
- Community support service providers
- Advocacy groups
- Industry

Key Findings

1. Primary health care is the ultimate focus for future successes in patient care outcomes; and
2. Emergency Departments of any configuration have increasingly become a safety net for a dysfunctional primary health care system.

Next Steps

With the completion of the Small Community Hospital Emergency Department Study, the Erie St. Clair LHIN will now focus on the following tasks:

- **Creation of a Primary Health Care Task Group** – a group comprised of a cross section of key stakeholders, community members and health service providers, representing a broad mix of skills, knowledge and perspectives to advise on directions to improve primary health care services in Erie St. Clair.
- **Clinical Services Review** – a review of clinical services across the region to improve integration and help plan for health human resources, capital investments, and clinical services (as identified in the LHIN's second Integrated Health Service Plan).
- **Submission of Emergency Department Contingency Plans** - instruct hospitals to submit contingency plans for Emergency Departments to the ESC LHIN for approval. The plans will address how emergency services will be delivered in the scenario of an unforeseen closure due to extreme weather, inability to secure staff, etc.



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3.

- **Await Rural and Northern Health Care Panel Recommendations** - review and incorporate the panel's recommendations into a local plan as required, with the assistance of the Primary Health Care Task Group.

For further information please contact:

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