

Private home care – a vital component of the health care continuum in Ontario

September 2010

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) advocates for the creation of a strong, reliable and accessible home care system which fully supports Ontarians to remain independent at home for as long as possible. This system of care includes publicly and privately funded delivery and is becoming increasingly important.

Ontario's provincial publicly funded home care program is vital to supporting the publicly insured health system by enabling early discharge of patients from hospitals and providing an alternative to long-term care homes. For the overwhelming majority who prefer to remain in their community, home care is more desirable, cost effective and more *health effective*.ⁱ In Ontario in 2009/10, approximately 603,000 individuals received 28,690,613 visits/hours of care at home funded by the MOHLTC.ⁱⁱ

Publicly funded home care services are designed to complement and supplement, but not replace, the efforts of individuals to care for themselves with the assistance of family, friends and community. A fundamental component of home care is that family and/or friends will provide care to supplement the publicly funded service. Home care service providers are often contracted to deliver additional hours that supplement publicly funded care. Often, this care is paid by privately-insured employment plans and/or government programs (such as respite programs) and/or direct private purchase. The OHCA estimates that 150,000 Ontarians purchase an additional 20 million visits/hours of home care services annually in order to remain at home.ⁱⁱⁱ

"Home care is central to the success of health reform and to making the overall health care system function more efficient and effectively"
(Hollander)

Home care services are publicly and privately funded. The MOHLTC purchases 28.6 million visits/hours of home care per year. Another 20 million visits/hours annually are purchased privately.

The purchase of private home care services allows individuals to remain at home surrounded by family, friends and helps them to continue to contribute to their community. These individuals may be "on the fringe" of admission to a facility, or may not be eligible or entitled to additional publicly funded care. Privately purchased home care service often provides the vital few hours of care and respite that enables families to continue their

caregiving responsibilities – which many are fulfilling while raising their children and holding a job.

Organizations providing privately purchased home care service are usually incorporated entities, and can be one of the following: a non-profit organization, a private corporation, a municipal government or an aboriginal organization.^{iv} The service that they offer is intensely personal and provided at a time when individuals are most vulnerable. As such, private home care providers carefully recruit, educate and support their staff emphasizing a strong customer service orientation. Providers of privately purchased home care must pay constant and vigilant attention to the needs of families that retain their services. They must achieve excellence 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Their success and reputation are directly linked to each client's level of satisfaction.

The provider-family relationship is crucial and personal. As the provider of private home care is often supporting the public system and the network of family caregivers, the organization must take an active role in ensuring that family members are equipped with the knowledge they need to provide care to the client. Many provide written and verbal updates to families and members of the health care team and offer reference materials to support care at home.

Family caregiving is becoming an increasingly important part of the caregiving network. It is estimated that 27% of Ontarians have personally cared for a family member or close friend with a serious health problem in the past 12 months.^v The contribution of families is substantial and often done at a personal and emotional cost because it is natural to want to provide care and support for a loved one during illness, recuperation or palliation. With the trend toward decreased hospital stays and the provision of health care closer to home, there has been a resurgence of emphasis and expectation on family and community. However, today families are smaller and more dispersed and as a result many seek assistance from an outside source to enable care at home.

Selecting a Home Health Care Provider can be made a lot easier by asking some questions about the organization. For a list of suggested questions –
http://www.homecareontario.ca/public/clients/service_questions.cfm#reference

The decision to purchase care should be made as carefully as with the purchase of any other service. For families seeking home care service, it is wise to choose reputable businesses that guarantee high quality of service provision and fair labour practices. Home care organizations that choose to belong to an association, such as the Ontario Home Care Association, are typically those with high standards related to all aspects of service. Families are therefore assured a standard of excellence and business responsibility matching the importance of the work they do for people.

Conclusion

Home care in Ontario, both publicly and privately funded, is a vital component of the health care system and integral to the broader health system transformation in the province. Home care research tells us that people want to remain at home for as long as possible and families will try to find ways to ensure that loved ones can maintain independence.

The OHCA believes that health system stakeholders need to work together to create seamless transitions within and across publicly and privately funded providers of health care. To do otherwise is to compromise health outcomes for those for who need support and want to remain at home.

About Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA)

The OHCA, *the voice of home care in Ontario*, is a membership association representing providers of quality home care services from across Ontario. OHCA members represent an estimated 25,000 staff collectively serving 300,000 Ontarians per year. OHCA works with families as integral partners in the delivery of home care services and as such estimates that 1.2 million Ontarians are impacted by members. OHCA is dedicated to promoting the growth and development of the home and community health care sector by helping to shape health care policy, supporting members to excel, and being a leading source of information on home and community care. OHCA members are accredited through Accreditation Canada, CARF, and/or registered with the International Standards Association (ISO).

For more information, contact:

Susan D. VanderBent, Executive Director
Phone: 905-543-9474
Fax: 905-545-1568
Email: suevan@homecareontario.ca

For the latest in news and information about the home care sector in Ontario, subscribe to the Ontario Home Care Association's 'House Call' at www.homecareontario.ca.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Caplan, The Hon.E. (2005) Realizing the Potential of HOME CARE Competing for Excellence by Rewarding Results.

ⁱⁱ OACCAC, CCAC Report of Measurements, retrieved from <http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=15&LanguageID=1&MenuID=138>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ontario Home Care Association, (2009) *Creating an Ontario Home Care Rebate to Prevent Additional Costs to the Frail and Vulnerable*. Retrieved from <http://www.homecareontario.ca/public/about/publications-presentations.cfm> . The findings are based on results of an OHCA membership survey and polling data from OHCA members conducted in 2009. Reasonableness was affirmed as follows:

1) The Health Council of Canada estimates that 500,000 people across Canada purchase home care privately (Health Council of Canada, 2008, Fixing the Foundation: An Update on Primary Health Care and Home Care Renewal in Canada. Toronto: Health Council. [www.healthcouncilcanada.cahttp://secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/products/trends_home_care_mar_2007_e.pdf](http://secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/products/trends_home_care_mar_2007_e.pdf), p8) and as Ontario represents approximately 39% of Canada's population, 150,000 is a conservative estimate

2) In an unpublished study, André Grenon from Health Canada estimated private home care spending in Canada at \$963.1 million in 2002-2003 (CIHI 2007- Public-Sector Expenditures and Utilization of Home Care Services in Canada: Exploring the Data , p3). OHCA assumed a growth rate on private home care spending from 2002 to 2010 and an average consumer cost of \$23.00 per hour, recognizing that approximately two thirds of purchased care is for home support.

^{iv} MOHLTC website http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/5_glossary.html

^v Change Foundation. (2008) Facing the Facts Issue Informal Care