

Eastern Health Launches Community-Based Respiratory Program

October 28, 2021 – St. John's, NL: Eastern Health is announcing the launch of a new and innovative community-based comprehensive respiratory care (CRC) program which will make it easier for patients with chronic respiratory disease to access care in the community. The referral-based program provides preventative care and fosters self-management through enhanced education and supports that have the potential to significantly improve health outcomes and quality of life for those living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma. Services are provided by a registered respiratory therapist (RRT) who is also a certified respiratory educator who works in collaboration with the patient's primary care provider to treat the patient.

Dr. Gokul Vidyasankar, Medical Director of CRC, is a strong supporter of this strategy. "Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest rates of COPD in the country, with longer-than-average length of stay for acute care admissions. CRC addresses the fundamental aspects of COPD, such as diagnostic testing, education and inhaler management, and advanced-care planning. This initiative is a more sustainable model of care and has the potential to change the future of lung health in this province."

There are two main elements to the CRC program. The first is the INSPIRED COPD Outreach Program, a nationally recognized program, which stands for Implementing a Novel and Supportive Program of Individualized Care for Patients and Families Living with Respiratory Disease. The program is designed to support those living with COPD in their own homes by providing them with the tools and education to better self-manage and prevent disease exacerbation. An RRT creates an action plan together with the patient and their primary care provider, discusses advanced-care planning, and assists patients with navigating the health system. INSPIRED is currently delivered either in-person, or virtually for more remote regions.

The second component of the program is a new in-person comprehensive respiratory education clinic which is located at United Shores Health Centre in Holyrood. The clinic offers a dedicated service for patients living with respiratory disease, primarily COPD and asthma. Through education and training offered at the clinic, patients will learn more about their disease, review inhaler technique, and discuss preventative strategies such as action plans and breathing techniques. Additionally, the clinic offers spirometry, which is a breathing test that is fundamental to the diagnosis of airway disease. The clinic has the potential to improve overall quality of life for these patients, in a shared-care approach with primary health-care providers.

"The comprehensive respiratory care program is a primary health-care approach to care by ensuring that patients' care is coordinated and integrated in the community," said Melissa Coish, Regional Director, Primary Health Care and Chronic Disease Prevention and Management. "This innovative patient-centred program empowers individuals living with respiratory disease to self-manage their disease in a cost-effective and efficient manner and in the comfort of their own home. At Eastern Health, we are excited to move forward with this new program which we believe will improve the quality of life for our patients living with respiratory disease."

The program is referral-based generated directly from acute care medicine units in hospitals, emergency departments and primary health-care providers. All appointments are arranged through an RRT working directly with the Comprehensive Respiratory Care Program and patients can contact their primary health-care provider for more information.

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About Eastern Health

Eastern Health is the largest, integrated health authority in Newfoundland and Labrador employing approximately 13,000 dedicated employees, over 700 medical staff, and is supported by approximately 2,000 volunteers, including members of numerous auxiliaries and fundraising foundations. With an annual budget of approximately \$1.6 billion, the authority offers the full continuum of health and community services including public health, long-term care, community services, hospital care and unique provincial programs and services. Serving a population of over 300,000, Eastern Health's geographic boundaries extend west from St. John's to Port Blandford including all communities on the Avalon, Burin and Bonavista Peninsulas.