

## OVERVIEW

- ◆ The elderly population is a vulnerable group with multiple chronic health conditions and special needs
- ◆ People aged 65 and older account for more than 48% of all days of hospital care
- ◆ Functional and cognitive decline occur in 33-50% of hospitalized older people
- ◆ Loss of independence and institutionalizations are frequent outcomes

## GOALS

The Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) is an innovative approach to improving hospital care for older patients, and was designed by Dr. Sharon Inouye and others at Yale University School of Medicine. The primary goals are:

- ◆ Maintaining physical and cognitive functioning of high risk elder patients throughout hospitalization
- ◆ Maximizing independence at discharge
- ◆ Assisting with the transition from hospital to home
- ◆ Preventing unplanned hospital readmissions

The Hospital Elder Life Program has been successful in returning older adults to their homes or previous living situations with maintained or improved ability to function.

**HELP** is carried out by a skilled interdisciplinary team with geriatric expertise, assisted by trained volunteers, who implement interventions to address the special needs of older adults.

## Services Provided:

- ◆ Geriatric interdisciplinary assessment and interventions coordinated by an Elder Life Specialist
- ◆ Assistance from specially trained volunteers, overseen by interdisciplinary professionals, who provide the following programs:
  - **Daily Visitor:** Orientation, communication and social support
  - **Feeding Assistance:** Help and companionship during meals
  - **Therapeutic Activities:** Mental stimulation, relaxation and socialization
  - **Early Mobilization:** Daily exercise and help with mobilization
  - **Vision / Hearing:** Adaptations and equipment
- ◆ Provides education program for professional staff about geriatric issues
- ◆ Linkage with community services to assist with the transition from hospital to home.

## Ways the Program Fits Our Needs

Very consistent with quality initiatives to reduce adverse effects of drugs, reduce drug errors, reduce falls and reduce length of stay

Responsive to patient and family needs for more consistent patient support (often for non-clinical tasks)

Is an organized, focused intervention with proven results:

- ◆ reduces the incidence of delirium in hospitalized older adults
- ◆ maximizes independence at discharge
- ◆ improves the geriatric skills of hospital staff

## Volunteer Characteristics

- ◆ Reliable
- ◆ Understands Limitations and Boundaries
- ◆ Executes Good Judgement
- ◆ Maintains Confidentiality
- ◆ Demonstrates Respect
- ◆ Enthusiasm and Active Listening
- ◆ Caring and Compassionate

Volunteers are an essential component and are important and valued team members of the HELP program.



## Interested in Applying?

Interested in applying as a HELP volunteer or for more information please contact:

Kourtney Richardson  
Elder Life Specialist  
NWHC: Palmerston District Hospital and  
Louise Marshall Hospital  
519-323-2210 ext 2325  
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## TO BECOME A HELP VOLUNTEER

- ◆ **Age requirement of 17**
- ◆ **Police Reference Check**
- ◆ Complete a Volunteer Application
- ◆ An **interview** is arranged for each volunteer to discuss ability and qualifications.
- ◆ Screening – **2 reference checks will be completed on each potential volunteer.**
- ◆ **Health Review** – A two-step TB test and up-to-date immunizations are required.
- ◆ **Orientation** – an explanation of the various hospital departments, safety protocols and an introduction to the sign-in procedures will take place.
- ◆ **Training** – all HELP volunteers will attend 16 hours of classroom training (4 days, 4h sessions) and 12 hours of clinical training (“job shadow” shifts) with the ELS or a volunteer trainer.
- ◆ **Commitment** – A minimum commitment of 1- 3hshift/week over a 6month duration is required

## Mission

Palmerston and District Hospital Foundation along with Louise Marshall Hospital Foundation will be recognized and respected as strong partners for the perpetuation of quality rural health care.

## Vision

Working with the North Wellington Health Care Corporation, its staff, and the local community, we will create a spirit of giving, goodwill, and support for our hospital. We will plan and implement events and programs to raise funds for priority projects to keep quality health care close to home.

## Values

- a strong sense of community and rural spirit
- our faithful individual donors and supportive businesses, organizations, and local government
- a co-operative, working relationship with our doctors, nurses and hospital staff
- the effective stewardship of funds raised to support the ongoing advancement of health care in our hospital

Created 2012



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*Helping to maintain  
cognitive, physical and  
emotional well-being in  
hospitalized older patients*