

Excellent Care For All.



Toronto Central LHIN Virtual Ward

Program Description

The Virtual Ward is an innovative partnership between St. Michael's Hospital, Women's College Hospital, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the University Health Network and the Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre. Patients who are deemed to be at high risk for re-admission into hospital are "admitted" to the Virtual Ward on the day they are discharged. The term 'virtual' is used because there is no physical ward: patients are cared for in their own homes. While at home, they receive case management and medical support from an interdisciplinary team, which integrates hospital, primary and home care. There is 24/7 physician availability. These elements are what one would find in a hospital 'ward'.

The process

- A hospital assessment is conducted to see if patients qualify for the Virtual Ward. At this time only general internal medicine patients are eligible.
- Patients who qualify for the Virtual Ward are asked to provide consent since this program is being rigorously evaluated with a randomized control trial – patients are assigned to either the "Virtual Ward" or to "usual care". At the end of the study, the readmission rates of both groups will be compared.
- Virtual Ward patients are assigned an intensive case manager to monitor their care plans.
- The Virtual Ward team meets daily to discuss the patients' needs. Medical and nursing care, along with care coordination, personal support and other services, are provided in the location that makes the most sense for the patient.

- Family physicians are contacted when their patients are admitted to the Virtual Ward, and are encouraged to participate in the development of a shared plan of care.
- Virtual Ward physicians and pharmacists conduct home visits where appropriate.
- Patients receive care in the Virtual Ward for 2 to 6 weeks, on average, and are then discharged back to the care of their family physician.

The Virtual Ward Team

- 2 full time CCAC care coordinators
- 1 full time CCAC team assistant/ward clerk
- 1 part time hospital-based WCH registered nurse
- 1 part time CCAC community pharmacist
- Full time physician (usually a general internist) available by pager 24/7, scheduled in 3 week blocks
- 1 part time CCAC community nurse practitioner, mainly for follow-up of patients who are waiting for a family doctor

For more Information, Contact:

Françoise Ko, Ph.D.
Virtual Ward, Project Manager
St. Michael's Hospital
www.virtualward.ca