

Rehab Assistant and RPN recognized for gerontological excellence at NHH

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) recognizes individual staff members throughout the year for personal accomplishments. Achievements in innovation and leadership are celebrated, as well as outstanding examples of the hospital's values of integrity, quality, respect, collaboration and compassion.

On Wednesday, August 27th, the winners of NHH's newest staff recognition awards were announced at a staff forum.

First introduced in June 2013, the Gerontological Excellence Awards celebrate personal achievement in what has become a timely priority for NHH: exceptional patient care for those over the age of 65. In Cobourg alone—the largest community in NHH's catchment area—the percentage of the population aged 65 and over was 26.4% in 2011, considerably older than both the national percentage of 14.8 and the provincial percentage of 14.6.

"Gerontology isn't a department or a unit," said Helen Brenner, NHH's Vice President of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive, who presented the awards. "It's a specialty we all need to own."

Nominations were open to all staff members throughout the month of June (Seniors' Month), underscoring the fact that every member of the team has a role to play in the quality of an older adult's stay at the hospital.

Eleven individuals were nominated for the award in 2014. As Helen Brenner explained, "All demonstrate great sensitivity to the needs of the individual patients and their families and they all share a true passion for gerontology and the unique needs of hospitalized older adults."

Presented with the 2014 awards were **Jeanette MacDonald**, a Rehabilitation Assistant in NHH's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit, and **Susan King**, a Registered Practical Nurse on 2B.

Nominated by her department, Jeanette was recognized for the "exceptional care she demonstrates every day." A recognized leader in fall prevention, Jeanette is a smart moves coach with a special interest in teaching staff in her department and across the organization the best ways to safely transfer older adults. She pays special attention to creating a home-like routine for older adults, a fact supported by a testimonial from one of her recent patients who said: "From the very beginning I found Jeanette to be compassionate, patient, extremely pleasant and very skillful in teaching my exercises. When I first came to NHH I could neither walk nor look after myself. As of today, with the aid of my walker, I am now able to walk and am independent in caring for myself. I will never forget all that Jeanette has done for me, and I will always remember her with much gratitude and affection."

Susan King was nominated by several colleagues who shared accolades about her practice and care of older adults. Described as having a "friendly, caring approach" and a great sense of humour, Susan is particularly skilled at gently redirecting people with dementia when they become frustrated or anxious. She provides both physical and emotional support to elderly patients using, for example, the Montessori doll therapy, an innovative approach to supporting patients with dementia. Described by one of her colleagues as a caregiver who "brightens her patient's day," Susan is also described as a strong advocate for the benefits of mobility among her senior patients.



Award winner and Rehab Assistant Jeanette MacDonald (centre) with Geriatric Emergency Management Nurse Sarah Gibbens (left) and VP, Patient Services/Chief Nursing Executive Helen Brenner. Also recognized was Registered Practical Nurse Susan King.

Thank you Northumberland! Fantastic response to our call for volunteers to support our Hospital Elder Life Program—spots still available!

As shared in last month's *In Touch*, NHH's Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) is currently recruiting volunteers willing to contribute several hours a week with senior inpatients.

Delirium (acute confusion) and functional decline are common complications for many older hospitalized patients. In recent years, research has shown that these negative side-effects can be avoided or minimized through a series of simple but deliberate "interventions" supported with the "help" of volunteers.

Recruited through the NHH Auxiliary and guided by NHH's Elder Life Specialist (ELS), HELP volunteers are working with a variety of inpatients on specific interventions customized to individual needs to help avoid delirium and functional decline.

Visits occur in either the morning or afternoon. HELP volunteers are expected to commit to one 3- to 4-hour "shift" a week for a minimum of six months. Typical patient assignments include visits to offer support and help orienting with hospital surroundings, participation in specific therapeutic activities such as a game of trivia or discussion of current events, companionship during mealtime and encouragement to stay as physically active as possible.

Thanks to all those who have expressed an interest in volunteering in the last month. There are still many opportunities available! Interested volunteers are invited to contact Linda Smith, Director of Volunteers for the NHH Auxiliary, at 905-372-6811, ext. 4630 or by email at lsmith@nhh.ca.

For full details on the HELP program and the important role of local volunteers please see the related news release on nhh.ca.

Scent sensitivities Visiting NHH? No perfume please

Heavily scented products like perfume, after shave and lotions can cause unpleasant health reactions in many people, including headaches, nausea, shortness of breath and skin irritation. Even small amounts can trigger an attack for allergic or asthmatic patients and staff, as well as those with other conditions.

Please keep in mind our responsibility to "share the air" when you're planning a visit to NHH and refrain from wearing perfumes or scented products. Those who struggle with these allergies will be grateful.

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Also recognized for their geriatric expertise at the August 2014 ceremony were the following staff members: Ann Hoffman, RN, Palliative Care; Jeri Henderson, Ward Clerk, 2B; Suzanne O'Rourke, RN, 2B; Kristin Devereaux, Ward Clerk, 2A; Tammy Misasi, Dietary Department; Alice Cunnington, RPN, float; Steve Colson, RPN, Restorative Care; David Harris, Physiotherapist; and Dr. David Moorsom.

Introduced to NHH by Sarah Gibbens, Geriatric Emergency Management nurse, the Gerontological Excellence Award ceremony is now an important annual opportunity to recognize the special efforts of staff members who are helping NHH become a true centre of excellence in the provision of care sensitive to the complex care needs of older adults.



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