**In the Emergency Department, NPs Thrive on Making a Difference!**

Suturing wounds, ordering lab tests and x-rays, diagnosing ailments, prescribing medications and providing timely, primary health care is all in a day's work for four Nurse Practitioners in Chatham-Kent.

Tracy Creechan, Valerie Winberg, Corinne Pollard and Delynne Teetzel are all Nurse Practitioners (NPs) working at the Emergency Department (ED) at the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance. Tracy and Valerie work full-time in the department while Corinne and Delynne split their time between the ED and a primary health care clinic led by NPs at the nearby Sydenham Campus of CKHA.

In a typical work day, the NPs care for between fifteen to twenty patients. On any given day, patients may present with acute minor ailments such as sprains and strains, common illnesses and infections to complications from chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes.

"It's a very interesting role, and quite exciting," says Tracy. "It's almost like a puzzle. We figure out what's wrong with the patient, and then work with them to come up with a solution."

The NPs spend most of their time in the fast-track area, moving less serious patients through the emergency department in an efficient manner. Occasionally, the skills of the NP are also utilized for those patients in urgent need of care including patients with chest or abdominal pain, accident victims and the frail elderly.

"Often there are complicated cases that require you to initiate labs and tests and involve other team members", according to Valerie. "It definitely makes it an interesting and challenging place to work. No two cases are ever the same."

In order to provide comprehensive holistic care for their patients, the NPs collaborate with other team members as needed including their physician partners, nurses, physiotherapists, home care specialists, respiratory therapists, pharmacists and one another.

In addition to providing care for patients in the ED, Corinne and Delynne also work in a clinic setting where they provide primary care services to their community. Corinne started the clinic as a hypertension clinic after noticing a large number of patients with high blood pressure waiting in the ED for routine care. Tracy also followed a select group of patients on anticoagulation therapy who required repeated laboratory testing and medication adjustments.

As Delynne explains, "We are able to provide continuity of care for these clients, many who have been without a regular health care provider for a long time". There are two supportive collaborating physicians working both on and off-site for those patients requiring treatment beyond the NP scope of practice.

While each NP enjoys the role for different reasons, they all agree on one thing: the contact with patients and their families and the positive impact they can make on someone's health provides them with a high level of satisfaction in their role as a NP.

"We're able to develop that relationship with the patient and talk to them and figure out what's wrong with them. It's really rewarding," said Tracy.

"I like connecting with the patients" Corinne added. "It is great to be in a role which supports providing health promotion, disease prevention and encouragement to patients' to partner in the management of their chronic disease."