

National Nursing Week

Making things work for community nurses

Somewhere between 70 and 80 times a day, the telephone rings in Judy Hastings office at the Windsor Regional Cancer Centre (WRCC).

As the only certified Telepractice Nurse in southwestern Ontario, the demand for her help is almost unlimited.

"My training and experience gives me the knowledge and ability to provide help by telephone," explains Hastings, who earned a Certificate in Nursing Telepractice from Centennial College in 2005. A nurse since 1971, she has worked at the WRCC for seven years.

"My position at Windsor Cancer Centre entails triaging calls from community partners either community nursing, Hospice nurses, and physiotherapists, dieticians, occupational therapists and [Community Care Access Centre] CCAC case managers."

Typically, nurses call her about chemo or radiotherapy patients, or those receiving end-of-life care. When community nurses are assigned to patients, they call Hastings to access clinical information on the patient, and receive help in developing an in-home care plan.

"My goal is to make nursing a little easier for community nurses by facilitating as quickly as possible orders, medication and information necessary to care for our patients in their home while they are going through chemotherapy, radiotherapy or at end of life."

Hastings collaborates with community nurses, physicians, the CCAC, Hospice and her own WRCC staff. She is also an educational resource for community nurses and WRCC staff and facilitates the flow of information between community partners in a home setting and WRCC clinical team.

When a nurse is assigned to a cancer patient in-home, Hastings is contacted. She gathers appropriate



Judy Hastings, of the Windsor Regional Cancer Centre collaborates with community nurses, physicians, the CCAC, Hospice and her own WRCC staff to deal with the needs of cancer patients. Photos: Ed Goodfellow - Special to The Star

health and assessment information from the community nurse and discusses this with the WRCC clinical team for further assessment and management of care in the home. Hastings then provides this clinical information to the community nurse to assist in setting up an appropriate care plan to best accommodate the patient's needs. She follows up on the nurse's questions and assessments within the same day where at all possible.

"I have to figure out what resources are necessary and how to access them quickly. We tried to

avoid a time delay if at all possible."

Often, she will deal with calls related to pain control, symptom management and medication renewals. She relays clinical recommendations back to the community nurses and faxes orders to the appropriate agencies and pharmacies. Hastings works closely with CCAC case managers and Community Nurses to ensure continuity and appropriateness of care.

"My physicians trust my judgment. I've learned through both education and experience," she says.

one [day] is like the other. The calls are challenging."

She's also an educational resource. Each year Hastings provides a package of information to the five community nursing agencies that work with WRCC. "What I send serves as an educational foundation on in-home care for our patients."

For example, she offers a binder with up-to-date information on chemotherapy drugs. She will also gather material on specific topics, such as a particular type of tumour, and provide that to the agencies for their reference.

Her duties don't end when she leaves the office. Hastings is also chair of the End of Life local committee and sits on the End of Life Regional Steering Committee.

Working with cancer-stricken patients might seem depressing to some but Hastings cites the strong support system in place at WRCC as a great resource.

"Yes, we see those who are very ill, but we also see successes."

Patients are very appreciative of the services provided, she adds, "even the little things."

"I get satisfaction in my job by knowing that I am there for the community nurse doing a hard job alone in the community. I have been there and it is difficult not having support of your colleagues around you to bounce ideas off of, and share information with right at that moment when you are caring for your patient in their home. It is nice to know someone is a phone call away to help you when needed."



Dr. Caroline Hamm (left) instructs Judy Hastings on a nurse/patient link.

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JUDY HASTINGS, RN

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...for supporting your fellow caregivers.

...for treating patients as you would your own family.

...for every little thing you do to strengthen our standard of care.

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For some people, compassion isn't just a feeling. It's a lifestyle. This National Nurses Week, Henry Ford Health System is pleased to honor our many nurses for all their ongoing compassion and commitment. Your desire to help others does not go unnoticed. So for all that you do, we thank you for making a difference.



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