

The Nurse Practitioner

A nurse practitioner enjoys privileges that a registered nurse does not, such as the ability to prescribe certain medicines and to order diagnostic tests



Selina Rehman, Nurse Practitioner of Multicultural Council gives her patient Brooke a general checkup and weighs her (below).

Photos: Ed Goodfellow - Special to The Star

Contrary to most medical professionals, nurse practitioner Selina Rehman actually has the opportunity to get to know her patients.

In practice since February for the Multicultural Council of Windsor-Essex, Rehman sees less than a dozen patients a week because only those clients of the Council are eligible. And that gives her the time to deal with their particular challenges - language and cultural barriers in particular. Rehman operates the clinic for the Multicultural Council, so her clients are those individuals who are newcomers to Canada. "Frequently they will bring in someone to translate for them," she says. "They have difficulties of culture shock and language barrier. My office (in Pickwick Plaza near Lauzon) is also where they come to learn English so they feel comfortable here and it's very convenient. A lot of clients live close by or can come by bus route."

The Multicultural Council is not a health organization and Rehman is its only health professional. She, in fact, developed the nurse practitioner program and clinic.

"When I started last fall, there was nothing but a room."

Rehman became a nurse practitioner in September 2007 after completing her certification exam. She had been a registered nurse for five years, working at Hotel Dieu-

Grace, when she decided to go back to school. It was then that she found out about the Ontario government initiative, "Grow your own nurse practitioner."

"Basically, it meant that if an agency such as the Multicultural Council had been looking for over two years for a nurse practitioner, they could apply for a grant from the Ministry of Health to sponsor a RN to go to school."

Under the program, Rehman could go to school while collecting her salary. The program also reimburses education-related expenses. In exchange, the new nurse practitioner must agree to a service commitment to the agency.

"I thought it would be a great opportunity because I enjoy nursing and I think that Windsor is an underserved population. Nurse practitioners are more independent than registered nurses, so I could provide primary care for clients without a family doctor."

The 12-month program results in a nurse practitioner certificate. Rehman plans to return to school to earn her Master of Nursing degree.

As a nurse practitioner, Rehman enjoys privileges that a registered nurse does not, such as the ability to prescribe certain medicines and order diagnostic tests. She operates with a physician "partner", Dr. Sherapartap Rai, who works at

clinics around the city and in emergency departments. "He doesn't work at our clinic. I can call him when needed though."

Rehman has scheduled clients for basic health care but also accepts walk-ins. She does a lot of presentations on health care and health maintenance such as smoking cessation and blood pressure clinics.

"I can also refer to other specialists when needed."

How is this different for Rehman? "I've always worked in the hospital sector. This is community nursing and primary care. In the hospital, you treat for illnesses they already have. In primary care, you try to keep people healthy through education and immunization. It's preventative."



"We know part of settling into a new country, newcomers experience difficulty in obtaining health care. There are a number of reasons why this happens. Often it's because our system of health care is different or language acts as a barrier. Having a Nurse Practitioner onsite offers a wide-ranging approach allowing us to combine our services. For instance, accessing an interpreter from our Language Services Program is one example. The Nurse Practitioner has been a long awaited program to improve health outcomes for many people."

KATHLEEN THOMAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL OF WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

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15.7 per cent is between the ages of 45 to 49 years of age.

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