

# Putting the Heart in Home to Hospital to Home Transitions

Article by Joanne Ganton, Staff Liaison for the Primary Health Care Integration Network (PHCIN)



Primary Health Care Integration Network patient and family advisors (from left to right) Melissa Hartwell, Lucille Partington and Debbie Lynam (Missing: Lisa Wilson and Phil Norris)

*Photo courtesy of PHCIN*

## Patient and family advisors share priorities for home and acute transitions

Dear Alberta Health System: “Not every patient has family to help care for them so referral to community supports and equipment should be a basic requirement of any discharge plan.” Debbie Lynam, Patient Advisor.

Improving patient transitions from home to hospital to home is one area of focus for the Primary Health Care Integration Network (PHCIN). To help us better understand what patients actually experience during their transitions, the PHCIN used a creative engagement strategy at the Coalition’s September meeting.

Patient advisors set the tone for the meeting by each reading a letter written to the Alberta

“What matters most to me about improving transitions in care for patients and families is communication and detailed planning of discharge requirements . . . Patients should have the opportunity to be part of the care plan and discuss any additional requirements they might have.”

Debbie Lynam, Patient Advisor Edmonton Zone, Coalition member



healthcare system. Three advisors shared their story and what matters most to them about improving transitions in care.

To help address the challenges and gaps raised by our advisors' stories, Coalition members were asked to identify potential solutions, along with work currently underway in their zone. The output from this meeting is helping inform the PHCIN's transitions work going forward.

According to Mona Delisle, Acting Director of Integration & Innovation, "Having the patient advisors share their stories helped to anchor our work to their experience.

This allows us to keep top of mind who and why we are doing this work. We sometimes get caught up in operational system issues, but when we continuously remind ourselves of these stories it makes working through our challenges more meaningful and motivating."

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"We could not phone our local doctor... he is on holidays... Homecare said they could not come because the roads were too bad. We did call back to the hospital but we didn't really know who to speak to and no one was able to help us."

Lucille Partington, Patient Advisor  
North zone, Coalition member

### Keeping advisor engagement fresh and meaningful

"At each Coalition meeting, we strive to bring the patient advisor voices to the forefront in new and creative ways," says Joanne Ganton, staff liaison with the PHCIN. "Active participation of the advisors is our goal so they are meaningfully engaged at every Coalition meeting."

Feedback from Coalition members demonstrates that the patient advisor stories and participation are a highlight of the meeting. Our first patient engagement survey showed that 92 per cent of Coalition members and leaders who responded feel that advisors provide an important perspective in meetings. All of the respondents surveyed agreed that patient advisors make a positive impact on the work of the Network. The survey results also showed that 80 per cent of patient advisor respondents feel their contributions make a positive impact.

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"My patient experience has, for the most part, been very positive . . . For both of my stays in hospital, I am in complete wonder as to WHY the Alberta health-care system is still living in the Stone Age from a technology information sharing prospective."

Melissa Hartwell, Patient Advisor  
Calgary zone, Coalition member

Interested in helping improve primary health care in Alberta? Become part of our virtual patient and family advisor network. Contact Joanne Ganton at [joanne.ganton@ahs.ca](mailto:joanne.ganton@ahs.ca)