
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
Vancouver Coastal Health

RESOURCE FORMS PARTNERSHIP FOR OLDER PATIENTS AND STAFF

VICTORIA – The availability of Dorothy’s Story, a new seniors’ care education package - in English, simple and traditional Chinese - will help ensure seniors, their loved ones and health-care practitioners are working together to ensure better health care and improved outcomes for hospitalized seniors.

“Dorothy’s Story will inspire a new partnership and better communication between health professionals and older patients and their families,” said Vancouver-Fairview MLA Margaret MacDiarmid, on behalf of Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “The resource package supports the Province’s goal to provide the best care for older patients in B.C., while also allowing them and their families to build a stronger relationship with their health professional.”

Translation of Dorothy’s Story was generously supported by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and made financially possible through the Evergreen Taoist Church. The education materials identify best practices in seniors’ care, and provide information that will enable patients and their families to work in partnership with their health care team.

“S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has a long history of providing linguistically and culturally appropriate care for the seniors in the community. We trust this will be excellent educational tool for the residential care and health services,” said Thomas Tam, CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Dorothy’s Story shares 90-year-old Dorothy Margaret Donald’s journey through the hospital system. Upon Dorothy’s admission to hospital, medical personnel followed strict guidelines and protocols to treat her. But older patients are complex to treat, and treatments that are effective on younger people are often unpredictable in older, frail patients.

After a number of days, Dorothy’s condition deteriorated. She did not react well to some of the treatments she received, and despite the best efforts of her health-care team, Dorothy did not recover.

“My mother was elderly, and maybe nothing would have changed her experience during her last few weeks, but I believe an improved understanding of frail, elderly treatment protocols combined with an open, collaborative partnership between family and all health professionals on the care team would have improved the process, if not the outcome,” said Louise Donald, Dorothy’s daughter. “To its credit, Vancouver Coastal Health has taken a proactive approach to incorporating the lessons learned from my mother’s care and turned it into a learning tool for staff and families. I think my mother would be pleased to know her legacy will help other patients and their families.”

The overarching goal of Dorothy's Story is to facilitate creation of stronger partnerships between seniors, their families and caregivers, and health-care providers, all with the view of improving health outcomes for seniors admitted to acute care.

"Dorothy's story will help patients and their family members to understand how to partner with health-care providers to establish their goals of care and determine the optimal care path for achieving those goals," said Dr. Janet McElhaney, Providence Health Care and VGH division head, Geriatric Medicine.

For VCH staff, the Dorothy's Story resource consists of a video and a case study for facilitated discussion. The training module is in active use across VCH.

A Dorothy's Story video, brochure and bookmarks are available to the public along with an online feedback form. These materials are designed to encourage a patient's loved ones to become active partners in care, and are available online at: <http://www.vch.ca/>

"The availability of Dorothy's Story will enable staff and patients' families to help build bridges of caring to ensure health care is provided on a partnership basis that puts people first," said David Ostrow, president and CEO, Vancouver Coastal Health. "The outcome of a patient's participation, and also their family's participation in their own care, results in health care that is individualized, appropriate and of a high quality."

Release of these materials also coincides with the 10th anniversary of the ACE unit at VGH. ACE, the Acute Care for Elders program, is a specialized geriatric ward designed to reduce functional decline in acutely ill older adults, resulting in better clinical and process outcomes. The specialized ward has grown from 22 to 66 beds over its 10 years in existence.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is responsible for the delivery of \$2.9 billion in community, hospital and residential care to more than one million people in communities, including Richmond, Vancouver, the North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky corridor, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola.

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