

## Campbellford Memorial Hospital Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Support Group Makes a Difference



**Pictured above are left to right: Cheryl Mitchell (and her dog Flea); Norma Stoddard; Charlie Ellis; and Gordon Harsell. All are recent “graduates” of the hospital’s Integrated Chronic Disease Management Program and met with CMH’s Kerry Shudall to talk about how the program is helping them live better with their chronic disease.**

Trent Hills resident Gordon Harsell suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Sometimes plagued by shortness of breath, Gordon has found himself in the Emergency Room at Campbellford Memorial Hospital on more than one occasion. But an innovative Integrated Chronic Disease Management Program (ICDMP) offered by the hospital is helping Gordon and other program participants breathe easier.

The hospital’s ICDMP is an initiative offered in partnership with the Trent Hills Family Health Team and Community Living to area patients who are managing chronic disease such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or Congestive Heart Failure. The program is designed for area residents who have been assessed and who would benefit from attending a five week program to enable them to assist in the management of their disease. A multidisciplinary care team including nurses, physiotherapists, dietician, pharmacists and recreational therapists works with participants to help them understand their disease, help them make healthy choices and to build their confidence in better managing their condition.

For George, participation in the program taught him self-relaxation techniques to help him breathe easier when he was experiencing a shortness of breath. "I really benefited from the little things and the information that helped me day to day. I really liked the informal way the program was conducted. I felt comfortable in the group speaking up and asking questions. When it comes to your personal health and managing a chronic disease, we all have questions," he said.

George participated in 90 minute weekly meetings running for a period of five continuous weeks with a group of six other participants.

"Participants are expected to commit to attend all 5 meetings," explains Kerry Shudall, who leads the program for Campbellford Memorial Hospital, adding: "Our clients are identified for assessment for this program either by their family health team doctor or at point of discharge from CMH by the discharge planner. All patients attending the program must be medically stable to be able to participate in the program. Every patient discharged from the hospital with COPD/CHF is invited to participate. Clients can also self refer"

An interdisciplinary community outreach program was developed using the Lung Association and Heart Foundation guidelines. Community partners also now include Community Care for transportation support and Community Living Campbellford who provide support to clients requiring additional community information.

"Feedback from participating clients to date suggests that this program is having a positive impact on the patient's experience, satisfaction and health. In fact, we've been asked by clients who've attended the COPD program if they can come back every six months for a refresh should their symptoms change," explains Shudall.

For program participant Cheryl Mitchell, participation in the COPD Group helped her control her condition, breath better and live healthier. "I know what kind of food I should eat and in what portions. I know how to listen to my stressors and now understand what makes me anxious and upset, things that can impact my breathing. I am also more aware of how and when to use my medications correctly," she says, adding: "I look at the fact that I am no longer dependent on oxygen as a good sign."

Having the company of others to share in your experience is another benefit cited by participant Norma Stoddard. Norma was prompted by Cheryl to participate in the program when the two met as hospital patients. "By participating in this program, I learned how to breathe better with exercise designed to open up my lungs. I'm also learning to slow down and take my time rather than rushing through activities and getting out of breath," she says, adding: "By participating in this program, we've become a support system for each other. We always talk. I found the program very good. Everyone should attend as there is a lot to learn to help you live better."

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