

Happenings

Focus on Health-Care Settings: The Home Care Evaluation and Research Centre

Denise Guerriere, Patricia McKeever, and Peter Coyte

Health system restructuring in Canada has involved a dramatic shift towards the delivery of ambulatory, home-based, and, more recently, Internet-based health care. This dispersion of health-care services represents one of the most significant social changes of the last two decades and will continue to have major repercussions in the new century. Although restructuring has been rapid and ubiquitous, systematic economic evaluations of non-traditional health-care services and delivery settings have been lacking in Canada. This absence of evidence limits opportunities to measure effectiveness and impedes decision-making.

To fill this gap, the Home Care Evaluation and Research Centre (HCERC) was launched in 1998 at the University of Toronto, with public and private sector funding of more than \$1.2 million. HCERC's Co-Directors are Patricia McKeever (Faculty of Nursing) and Peter Coyte (Department of Health Administration, Faculty of Medicine). HCERC's goals are to facilitate collaborative research related to the settings where health care is sought, delivered, and received, and to support knowledge transfer and linkage activities throughout the research process.

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HCERC's growing research and stakeholder community addresses the organization, delivery, and financing of health care across diverse settings and sites. Currently, 26 research projects have been funded to a total of over \$6 million, with further funding pending. HCERC research is multidisciplinary in scope (e.g., health economics, health administration, nursing, epidemiology, political science, geography, law, sociology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, engineering, and medicine) and collaborative in design. Its focus areas have included utilization and uptake issues, funding, human resources, technology, home-based service provision, cost-effectiveness, and policy design. Recently funded economic evaluation projects include:

Evaluation of the Ambulatory and Home Care Record (AHCR), by Denise Guerriere, with Peter C. Coyte, D.E. Tullis, Wendy J. Ungar, and Mary Corey. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the reliability of the AHCR with adults who have cystic fibrosis. The secondary objectives are to measure the economic burden associated with care for CF patients through the use of the AHCR, and to assess the sensitivity of resource cost estimates to alternative methods of valuing patients' and informal caregivers' forgone time. This study is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The project timeline is 2 years, from 2000 to 2002.

Evaluation of the Chronic Pain Self-Management Program, by Sandra Lefort and Judith Watt-Watson, with Katherine Gray-Donald, Karen Webber, Peter C. Coyte, and Denise Guerriere. The purpose of this randomized clinical trial is to evaluate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of a community-based chronic pain self-management intervention delivered by multiple nurse facilitators in two provinces. This study is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The project timeline is 3 years, from 1999 to 2002.

At Home Early Discharge (AHEAD) Program for Hip Fracture Patients, by Susan Jaglal, with Peter C. Coyte, Hans Kreder, Gary Naglie, and Joseph Schatzker. The purpose of this randomized controlled trial is to evaluate the cost and effectiveness of a community-based early-discharge program for hip fracture patients. This project is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The project timeline is 3 years, from 1998 to 2001.

Cost Effectiveness of Home Versus Hospital Support of Breast Feeding in Neonates (Substudy #12 of the National Evaluation of the Cost-Effectiveness of Home Care), by Bonnie Stevens and Patricia McKeever, with Peter C. Coyte, Stacey Daub, M. Dunn, Denise Guerriere, Sharyn Gibbins, J. MacDonell, and Arne Ohlsson. The objective of

this randomized control trial was to analyze and compare the cost, safety, and efficacy of supporting breastfeeding in hospital and home settings for term and preterm neonates. This recently completed project was funded by the Health Transition Fund of Health Canada and The Hospital for Sick Children Foundation, from 1998 to 2001. Information on the project will soon be available on the HCERC Web site.

Costs and Outcomes of an Integrated Community Care Pathway for Post Myocardial Infarction Patients, by Peter C. Coyte and Linda Cash, with Wendy Young, Susan Jaglal, Sean Goodman, George Rewa, and Dave MacPherson. The research team developed, implemented, and evaluated the costs and outcomes of an integrated community-care pathway for post-myocardial infarction patients in an ethnically diverse population. This recently completed project was funded by the Health Transition Fund of Health Canada, from 1998 to 2000. Information on the study is available on the HCERC Web site.

To learn more about the HCERC research community, please visit www.hcerc.utoronto.ca or contact Kelly Murphy, Manager of Knowledge Transfer & Administration. Telephone: 416-946-5958. E-mail: k.murphy@utoronto.ca.