

**For immediate release
March 7, 2012**

A new study that compares the performance of Ontario's primary care models demonstrates that Ontario's Community Health Centres (CHCs) are the most effective model keeping people out of emergency departments – even though the populations they serve have more complex health care needs.

The study, conducted by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), investigated seven models which have different methods for compensating family physicians. The study zeroed in on differences in demographics of the populations served, as well as how often their patients/clients used the emergency department.

- Based on CHC client's characteristics, the study found that visits by CHC clients to emergency department visits was 21 per cent less than what was expected. Here in the Central LHIN (Black Creek CHC and Vaughan CHC), visits to emergency departments by clients were 40% less than expected.
- The study's demographic analysis confirmed CHCs are proactively connecting services with populations who have traditionally faced barriers accessing primary care and whose living circumstances leave them vulnerable to poor health. According to the study: "CHCs served populations from lower income neighbourhoods with higher proportions of newcomers and those on social assistance, had more severe mental illness and chronic health conditions...."

"Community Health Centres are key stakeholders within the health care system as they provide accessible care to the most vulnerable residents of the community where they are located." said Cheryl Prescod, Executive Director of Black Creek CHC.

"The fact that Community Health Centres make an effort to serve people with special circumstances that prevent them from accessing health care (home visits, translation services, subsidized transportation and childcare), makes them responsive to needs that other health care models do not address." added Isabel Araya, Executive Director of Vaughan CHC.

CHCs' comprehensive services and their focus addressing the social determinants of health are two potential reasons for CHCs strong results in the study. Along with the province's 10 Aboriginal Health Access Centres, they combine primary care with a wide range of counseling, health promotion and community development services. At the two



CHCs located in the Central LHIN, programs for people with chronic conditions, seniors, youth, and those experiencing mental health and addiction issues are especially designed to improve their health and keep them out of hospital.

“By providing multiple services under the same roof, CHCs are able to facilitate access and build a sense of community ownership for those who are receiving services.” said Tony Carella, Board Chair of Vaughan CHC. According to Patrick Opoku, president of Black Creek CHC’s board of directors, “The results of this study reinforces what we already know: CHCs are an integral part of an efficient, effective and sustainable health care system.”

Quick facts:

- A total of 73 CHCs serve approximately 357,000 people in 110 communities throughout Ontario. Here in the Central LHIN, the two CHCs serve over 12,000 people.
- CHCs are proactive directing services to those whose health is most at risk and are focused on lessening avoidable visits to hospital emergency departments.
- Other studies have confirmed CHC effectiveness. According to recent research conducted by the Élisabeth Bruyère Institute , compared to other models, CHCs deliver superior health promotion services and chronic disease prevention and management. They also do a better job orienting services to community needs.
- Governed by community members, CHCs give people a voice and a choice about the health services they receive. CHCs are also key connectors: inter-professional health teams partner with other health and social service agencies.
- CHCs are key contributors to the sustainability of our healthcare system. By creating community-based hubs where a wide range of services are integrated under one roof, they provide excellent value for money.

The ICES study can be found at:

http://www.ices.on.ca/webpage.cfm?site_id=1&org_id=68

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