



[Back to HIROC News](#)

## Project reveals ways to improve hospital-to-home transition for patients

*Two hospitals place CCAC case managers on site*

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A new project has shed light on ways to improve one of the biggest issues plaguing the healthcare system and patient quality of life.

After studying the problem of people occupying hospital beds when they are better suited elsewhere and tracking their transition home, the project has highlighted tangible ways to address the issues.

The Change Foundation, in partnership with the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC), recently released the findings of *Having Their Say and Choosing Their Way: Helping Patients and Caregivers Move from Hospital to Home*.

The groups funded the project which was conducted in the South East CCAC and Quinte Health Care's Trenton Memorial Hospital in 2008 and in the Toronto Central CCAC and Toronto Western Hospital in 2009.

Capturing the experiences and challenges of elderly patients moving from hospital to home or long-term care has already sparked changes to improve those transitions, The Change Foundation says.

"The Change Foundation invested in this project because timely, supportive transitions from hospital to home are key to high-quality, efficient healthcare," says Change Foundation CEO Cathy Fooks.

"The foundation is also committed to looking at quality improvement through the eyes of patients and caregivers and we've learned from their real-life stories that many of our efforts aren't paying off for them or the system."

As a result, healthcare providers are already investing in improvements aimed at making the system work better.

For instance, the OACCAC is working with the province's CCACs to implement a Client Health and Related Information System (CHRIS) to develop common assessment tools and automate a significant amount of the paperwork. The purpose is to allow for more time with clients and a quicker start to treatment.

The Toronto Central CCAC is assigning care co-ordinators who are responsible for a smaller number of clients with complex needs rather than carrying a generic

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caseload. Patients are expected to benefit by receiving more intensive support and consistency as they move through the healthcare continuum.

"This project, combined with others, was pivotal for the Toronto Central CCAC in challenging our thinking and behaviours," says Stacey Daub, senior director of client services with the Toronto Central CCAC.

"It brought the voice of the client to our planning and it significantly informed our path forward. We have dramatically changed our approach to transitions with our hospital partners as a result."

In addition, Quinte Health Care and the Toronto Western Hospital have placed CCAC case managers on site and in the emergency departments to help provide consistent co-ordination for post-acute patients.

The research unveiled people were remaining in hospital when they should be receiving care elsewhere. It revealed patients and caregivers need more face-to-face time with key staff members to navigate a system that's complex and cumbersome.

It also showed many people were confused about the next steps in their care after their hospital stay and were uncertain about where to turn for help with home-care services. Others were unsure about the rules for placement in long-term care homes.

"We will use this work to redirect and redesign appropriate care around the particular needs of patients as they leave hospital and get on with their lives," says OACCAC CEO Margaret Mottershead.

The findings were derived from interviews conducted with 30 recently-discharged patients and their caregivers and from observations drawn from shadowing key staff and tracking and analyzing the steps in the trek from hospital to home or from hospital to long-term care.

The Change Foundation is an Ontario health policy think-tank that generates research, analysis and discussion on health system integration and quality improvement in home and community care.

For more information, read the detailed project reports and The Change Foundation's commentary at [www.changefoundation.com](http://www.changefoundation.com)

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[back to top](#)