



A key component in evaluating the success and benefits of patient medical homes involves collecting stories of health care change from doctors, patients, and allied care providers. These stories take readers on a journey toward understanding how patient medical homes are improving care around the province.

Change Snapshot: how team-based care helps improve patient mental health.

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Good Care Gives Hope for Chronic Conditions

The most significant change I've experienced since having a nurse working with my family doctor is the improvement to my mental health. For the first time in 10 years since I started getting very sick, I have hope. I feel like I have my health back, and can go back work, back to school, and to being a contributing member of society again.

I did have a doctor 10 years ago, before I moved to the interior from the Lower Mainland, but I didn't feel cared about and I didn't feel like the doctor knew what was going on with my health or was concerned when things got worse and worse. She was working 24 hour shifts at the hospital, and then I'd see her in the clinic at 9am. I saw how burned out she was, and that the ultimate care for her as a doctor was poor.

I was a driving instructor for nearly 30 years, and had back, leg and neck issues. I had deformities in my feet and my knees were starting to throb. My heel bones had been tilted at a 45 degree angle and I had gone my whole life without having it cared for. The damage to my ligaments and tendons affected my back and neck. I also had severe allergies and had been to a specialist for three different skin tests. I had reaction lumps from the injection shots I received every week, but my previous doctor continued giving me the shots even after the specialist advised against them. She was aware of the issues I was experiencing, and I felt as though they were being dismissed as my health issues seemed to be mysterious and took time to figure out.

After getting two allergy shots per week for five years, I gave up. I wasn't ever able to build maintenance, where I could move to having one shot per week then go down to one per month. I felt delusional because my previous doctor had generally dismissed my concerns and was afraid that I would bother the doctor if I asked questions. I was depressed and discouraged about my health. My health was going downhill, and I was becoming hopeless that I would ever have a normal life again. At that time, I would find myself on the edge of the couch at two in the morning bawling, covered in sores on the back of my arms and shoulders from the allergies.

I started to see my current doctor four years ago, and six months ago I met the nurse when she started shadowing her. It was a nice way of going about it- the doctor asked if it would be okay with me for the nurse to come in. By the time I started seeing the nurse one on one, I already knew her and felt comfortable.

At 53 years old, for the first time, the nurse started asking me questions and drawing out what could be causing the pain in my legs and feet. The doctor helped me get braces and I am going to rehab. The nurse has given me advice to help with my allergies and gave me recipes with foods that I can afford.

When you're already sick and start to have a sense of hopelessness, you do give up after a while, feeling like you can't keep jumping through the hoops, waiting such a long time to see the doctor. It used to take



two to three weeks to book an appointment, and I would wait 30 to 60 minutes for a scheduled appointment. Now with the nurse, I wait only 10 minutes.

My life was saved. Without the support and advice from the nurse and doctor, I could not have dealt with my health issues after three years off work. I'm looking forward to getting my life back. I now have the majority of my needs met in one place, and I think this must also save costs in the system. It's hard not to be passionate about becoming a whole person again. The physical and mental go hand in hand, and having my physical needs met has helped me rise to the occasion mentally. I have things to look forward to now.

I feel the care that I am getting is of incredible quality. I feel I have the privilege of two health care professionals looking out for me. I have always felt that it doesn't matter what we do for a living, we are all human beings. What we expected in the past was for doctors to be super human, which is ludicrous. When our doctors get help, so they can sleep and have a family life, of course the care they provide will be that much better.