SWITCH Works to Keep Our Doors Open Just A Bit Longer

By Kim Davy, SWITCH Board of Directors

On the weekends and after hours, many doctors’ offices close their doors to patients. At the Community Clinic – Westside, however, the Student Wellness Initiative Toward Community Health (SWITCH) works to keep these doors open just a little bit longer.

Unlike a regular doctor’s office, SWITCH is run by university students, under the supervision of mentors from a variety of health professions. Students in medicine, nursing, psychology, social work, pharmacy, nutrition, and physical therapy, work together in teams to help address the medical needs of clients as well as provide health promotion programming to address the social determinants of health that disproportionately affect this clientele.

Even if community members do not need medical care, SWITCH creates a safe place for the community to come together on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturdays. Many clients just need a cup of coffee, a warm place to relax and a friendly ear to listen. Moreover, community members can drop in to socialize and learn a new skill through attending one of several programs offered each shift. These programs vary from yoga and family fitness fun to discussions and solutions to addictions and gambling problems.

SWITCH has made it a goal to focus their programs on improving the social determinants of health for this population. Therefore, SWITCH includes programs that target healthy early childhood development, money management, health education, food insecurity, social inclusion and housing. SWITCH provides high quality childcare and early childhood education to improve children’s chances for success later in life. Programs such as homework help, as well as science and math fun allow children to learn, grow and create goals for the future through working with positive role models that help them to thrive in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

Warm meals are provided allowing clients to obtain a healthy meal and forget about their struggle to find food, for at least one more day. Additionally, SWITCH began a program called Food for Tomorrow to offer our clients a bag of healthy groceries at a minimal cost. This program empowers individuals because they are purchasing their own food for their family and not resorting to handouts.

Homelessness is also a major concern for many of our clients. Since homeless people encounter more barriers to

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employment and tend to be in poorer health than other low-income individuals, SWITCH does everything it can to assist clients to secure at the very least temporary shelter so that clients have a warm place to sleep at night. Housing with support can generate positive outcomes, including enhanced life skills, improved health status, and increased sense of empowerment and involvement in the community. Therefore this is an area in which SWITCH is attempting to provide further assistance.

SWITCH has made substantial progress in the last 9 years thanks to the hard work of the staff, volunteers and the support of our partners: Saskatoon Community Clinic, University of Saskatchewan and Saskatoon Health Region-Primary Health.

In addition to the invaluable support of our partners, SWITCH has had the overwhelming support of the community. In the fiscal year of 2013-14 SWITCH received funding support from the following: Ministry of Education SaskSmart Innovations Fund, City of Saskatoon, United Way of Saskatoon and Area, PotashCorp, Dakota Dunes Community Development Corporation, Green Shield Canada, Regional Intersectoral Committee Community Initiatives Fund, SIAST Nursing, University of Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy, Community Outreach and Engagement and Students Union, Jack and Sylvia Vicq Fund and many more organization and individual donations. SWITCH literally could not exist without the genuine collaborative support of the community.

SWITCH truly is a life force of its very own; it is a thing of absolute beauty. Everyone from the students, to the staff, to the clients have been able to grow and work together to learn more about each other and help the other advance.

Draft 5-Year Plan Open to Review
By Deb Chobotuk, Strategic Planning Consultant and Community Clinic Member

Are Collaboration, Accountability, Respect, Engagement and Equity the values that should drive the Saskatoon Community Clinic? If we deliver care that is People Centred, Team Delivered, Value Focused and Community Driven, will we achieve our vision and mission? Are improved access, quality care and member engagement among the goals we should invest in over the next 5 years?

Your comments on a draft strategic plan for the Community Clinic are invited! You can review the plan on our website, or request a copy by calling Member Relations at 306-664-4243. Comments can be submitted by email as noted on the website or dropped off at the reception desk at the Downtown or Westside Clinics. Comments received by March 24th will be considered in the final editing of the plan.

The draft strategic plan was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee, following consultations with members, users, staff, community agencies and other stakeholders. Over 500 individuals participated in the process, resulting in a draft vision, mission, values, strategic directions and goals that once finalized, will guide the association over the next 5 years.

The overriding theme coming from the consultations was that people highly value the Community Clinic, appreciating the staff and care providers, the space, our interdisciplinary approach and our focus on community needs. Nevertheless, improvements were suggested in access to care, patient-centred care, programs and services, facilities and population health.

Once the plan is finalized and approved in spring, a plan will be developed to translate the broad 5-year goals into annual action plans with measurable outcomes.

Interested in Co-op Camp?
Do you know a young person aged 12 – 18 who would enjoy spending a week at the legendary Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program camp? Like-minded youth are welcome to have the experience of a lifetime. They gain skills and confidence to be great leaders and achieve their dreams. Participants and a sponsoring co-operatives each pay a portion of the fee.

Saskatoon Community Clinic has sponsorships available or you can contact the SCA for information about co-op sponsors: www.youth.sask.coop
For the second time in as many years, the Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Ltd. (CHSA) has had weather above freezing (0ºC) for its January 15th, Semi-Annual Meeting at Mayfair United Church.

With the unfortunate absence of CHSA President Anne Doucette resulting from a bout with a patch of ice, Ron Wheeler (Board Member), filled in as Chair and led those in attendance through an informative and inspirational evening.

**Presentation**

Saskatoon Community Clinic Physician, Dr. Morris Markentin (SMA's Physician of the Year) spoke about the tremendous work being done at the Westside Clinic around HIV treatment. The major focuses of this speech included – teamwork in healthcare delivery, the challenges of working with vulnerable and at-risk communities, having compassion for those in need, and the five words you will never hear a staff-member of the Community Clinic say “that is not my job.” With his extensive experience, big-heart, and poignant humour, Dr. Markentin proves to be a natural advocate for working with at-risk communities.

**Outstanding Volunteer Service Award**

This year, the CHSA Handicraft Club was recognized for their outstanding service. The group meets monthly to do a craft, discuss club business and enjoy some treats and social time. The crafts are sold at monthly sales tables with proceeds used to purchase items for the comfort of members and patients. They also make items for our staff and patients, for example, finger puppets to keep children occupied when blood is being taken. Recent purchases include the new furniture in the back waiting area of the Downtown Clinic and educational materials for the Centering Pregnancy Program. Every year they also make an anniversary quilt presented to a clinic newborn. The Club was thanked for their many contributions. Club members, Sonja Freiermuth and Mildred Shipman accepted the award on behalf of the Club.

**Resolutions**

There were no new resolutions proposed at the meeting.

The head of the medical group, Dr. Leane Bettin, provided an update on a resolution presented at last year’s Annual meeting related to home visits. She noted that Community Clinic doctors do home visits, and their determination of whether a home visit is appropriate is done on a case-by-case basis, and usually discussed with the patient over the phone.

**Announcements**

The Second Avenue Seniors’ Housing Co-operative was on hand to answer questions, and provide informational materials to anyone interested in the prospective housing coop. They announced that they are in the process of finalizing their business plan, and will have this available soon, which will enable the CHSA to consider how it can best support this initiative, and help address the larger issue of building seniors’ housing in Saskatoon.

Myrna Hewitt of Affinity Credit Union announced that a petition is being circulated against a proposed tax increase that would see credit unions taxed at a higher rate than banks. Copies of the petition are available in our waiting areas.

**Membership and Annual Service Fees**

The CHSA Membership Fees and Annual Service Fees will remain the same for the 2014-15 year, at $15.00 per individual, and $30.00 per family. It was noted that these fees have not changed in several years.
In 1962 the Province of Saskatchewan introduced a comprehensive health care plan to cover everyone in the province – MEDICARE! By 1966 the federal government had followed Saskatchewan’s lead and Canada had universal Medicare. The federal government used transfer payments to the provinces to establish national standards for health care. In 1984 the Canadian Parliament passed the Canada Health Act to strengthen the government’s role in enforcing national standards.

Ten years ago the prime minister, provincial premiers and territorial leaders agreed on priority areas for improvement, reaffirmed their commitment to the Canada Health Act, and agreed on a funding formula that saw a six percent annual rise in transfer payments for the ten year duration of the Health Accord.

The accord set the following priority areas: primary health care, home care, catastrophic drug coverage, access to diagnostic/medical equipment and information technology and an electronic health record.

The Health Accord expires on March 31st, 2014. The Harper government has refused to sit down with the provinces and territories to negotiate a new agreement. Instead Harper has unilaterally decided to abandon the federal role in health care. He has also introduced a funding formula that will reduce the funding to the provinces and territories some $36 billion over the next ten years beginning in 2017. The result is less money and no federal leadership leading to 13 separate health care systems in Canada. It is estimated that Saskatchewan will see a reduction in funding of some $100 million per year over the next ten years.

In addition the federal government is intending to scrap the equalization formula in the transfer payments to the provinces and replace it with an “equal per capita transfer” payment. This new formula hurts provinces with small or sparse populations and those that have larger populations of seniors or those with significant socio-economic needs.

A Day of Action is being planned by the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) in conjunction with their partners and provincial organizations to bring our attention to the expiration of the Health Accord. The Saskatchewan Health Coalition (SHC), of which the Saskatoon Community Clinic is a member, will be promoting events on March 31st to bring public attention to the harmful effect to the actions of the federal government. We hope to foster a public debate over this very important issue, to bring attention to the ever increasing presence of for-profit involvement in health care, and to encourage opposition to the federal government’s actions.

The Saskatchewan Health Coalition is in the planning stages for March 31st. Watch the Saskatoon Community Clinic website (www.saskatooncommunityclinic.ca) for updates. The community clinic will also have available postcards that you can sign and send postage free to Prime Minister Steven Harper expressing your displeasure at the lack of federal leadership in Canadian health care. You can also follow the debate and obtain information from the Canadian Health Coalition website (www.healthcoalition.ca).

**ACTION ALERT: Time for federal leadership on health care!**

~ Sign CACHC’s Petition! ~

Canada’s 2004-2014 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Health Accord expires in March 2014. This is the mechanism that ensures all Canadians nationwide enjoy the same level of healthcare. Please send a message to Prime Minister Stephen Harper urging the Government of Canada to negotiate a renewed 10-year Health Accord with the provinces and territories by signing the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres’ (CACHC) petition at http://www.knhub.ca/take-action. It takes less than a minute!
Diet and Cancer Prevention
By Cherith McGregor, Community Clinic Nutritionist

There is growing evidence that healthy eating can help decrease our risk for cancer; particularly when in combination with regular physical activity and maintenance of a healthy body weight.

Here are seven of the steps you can take to reduce your risk of cancer (note that these recommendations are also in line with Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide):

1. Eat more plant foods.
Fill at least 2/3 of your plate with plants. Base your diet on vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes. Think of meat as a garnish rather than a centerpiece of your meal, and "eat the rainbow" choosing a variety of colourful plant foods every day. Try vegetarian meals more often.

2. Follow a lower fat diet.
Choose lower fat foods, and use appropriate amounts of healthy oils in cooking.

3. Limit sugary foods and drinks.
Choose water for thirst, and reduce your use of sweet drinks including energy drinks, soda, fruit beverages and sports drinks. Save sweet treats for special occasions and enjoy a small portion.

4. Eat less red meat, and avoid processed meat.
Enjoy small portions of red meat less-often and avoid processed meats (such as sausage, bacon and hotdogs) or save them for special occasions.

5. Limit alcohol.
If you choose to drink alcohol, limit to no more than 2 standard drinks a day for men or 1 standard drink a day for women.

6. Use dietary supplements with caution.
Supplements do not provide the same cancer protection benefits as eating whole foods and are not recommended for cancer prevention. (There are specific instances where supplements are recommended, for more information speak with your physician or Registered Dietitian).

7. Be physically active every day.
Build up to 30 minutes of physical activity each day. As your fitness level improves, work your way up to 60 minutes (or more) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking, cycling, dancing or swimming) or 30 minutes of vigorous activity (such as running or tennis). It’s always wise to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise plan, especially if exercise is new to you. As well as being more active, work on being less-inactive. Reduce your sedentary activities, and time spent in front of a screen.

There are many different kinds of cancer, and we don’t always know what causes it, but avoiding tobacco, eating well, and staying active can help to reduce your risk.

When making any change, it’s best to take it one step at a time. Any positive adjustment you make to your diet and activity level can help decrease your risk of cancer. Remember that even a baby step is a step in the right direction.

Board Membership Opportunity!
The Saskatoon Community Clinic is seeking nominations for the Board of Directors. Our elected, volunteer board members represent our community of users and are responsible for the effective governance of our co-operative. Candidates should have experience with the Community Clinic and its services as well as knowledge, skills or expertise in at least one of the following areas:

Primary and Community Health Services - Co-operatives
Policies and procedures- Financial management
Strategic planning - Personnel management – Advocacy

Contact Member and Public Relations at 306-664-4243 or e-mail member.relations@communityclinic.sk.ca for more information. The next opportunity for election the Board of Directors will be in June 2014.

Watch the next issue of Focus for details!
Welcome to the Seniors of Tomorrow Education Series, a drop-in group program offered by the Counselling and Community Services Department. Learn about health topics, make new friends and have fun! Sessions are for Clinic members and patients and take place from 2–4 p.m. at Mel Langer Building, 424 1st Ave. N. on the date indicated.

Chair Yoga
Wednesday, March 19th
Join Occupational Therapist Brenda Goossen to learn therapeutic yoga exercises you can do at home to improve your strength and flexibility.

Can You Hear Me Now?
Wednesday, April 2nd
Is someone you know experiencing hearing loss? Learn more about hearing loss and what can be done to help!

STARS Air Ambulance
Wednesday, April 16th
Learn about the air ambulance service in Saskatchewan! Presented by Jeff Dickson, Public Relations Officer of STARS.

Emotional Intelligence
Wednesday, April 30th
We all know about IQ but what about EQ? Learn how emotional intelligence can help you better understand yourself and others, and strengthen relationships with family, friends and community!

The Joy of Music
Wednesday, May 14th
Saskatoon Symphony Musicians Melissa Goodchild and Kevin Grady will perform for us and teach us how music can enrich our lives and mental health!

Storytelling
Wednesday, May 28th
Have you ever thought about writing but are wondering how to get started? Bring your ideas and stories to this special group session!

Please call (306) 664-4282 for more information.
LiveWell with Chronic Pain
By Trudy Myers, Director of Physical Therapy

The Saskatoon Community Clinic and the Saskatoon Health Region are pleased to offer LiveWell with Chronic Pain at the Downtown location of the Community Clinic.

The workshop group meets for 2 1/2 hours once every week for 6 weeks, starting April 28th at 1:00pm.

Who is it for:
Caregivers and people experiencing chronic pain such as:
• Chronic musculoskeletal pain (such as chronic neck, shoulder, back pain, etc.)
• Whiplash injuries
• Chronic regional pain syndromes
• Repetitive strain injury
• Chronic pelvic pain
• Post-surgical pain that lasts beyond 6 months
• Neuropathic pain (often caused by trauma)
• Neuralgias (such as post herpetic pain, and trigeminal neuralgia)
• Post-stroke or central pain
• Persistent headache

Goals:
To have clients better manage their symptoms and their daily lives.
• To help participants obtain information, learn new skills and abilities, and develop higher levels of confidence to manage and cope with chronic pain.
• To give people more confidence in handling their own health problems.
• To give and receive support from others who are experiencing similar health problems.

Cost: Free

Please contact: LiveWell CDM Program, 306-655-LIVE/306-655-5483 (phone) or Trudy Myers, Director of Physical Therapy, Saskatoon Community Clinic, 306-664-4259.

~ Making Change ~

The Political and Social Action Committee is offering a series of noon hour workshops on issues that impact our members and the community. All are welcome! Bring your lunch! All sessions are at the Downtown Clinic Meeting room, 424 1st Avenue North, 12 noon to 1 p.m.

Better Bike Lanes and Other Good Ideas with Cathy Watts, President Saskatoon Cycles
Cathy will discuss how biking can be made safer in our city through infrastructure such as separated bike lanes, slower speed limits, visibility, education and well-signed routes. Join us to learn more about safer biking in Saskatoon!

Thursday, March 20th, 12 noon

Age Friendly Saskatoon with Cheryl Loadman, Age Friendly Saskatoon Initiative Coordinator, Saskatoon Council on Aging
How can we make our City friendly for all ages, including older adults? Cheryl will speak about the Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative recommendations recently presented to government decision makers, and other Saskatoon Council on Aging initiatives.

Wednesday, April 23rd, 12 noon

Upstream with Dr. Ryan Meili, Community Clinic Physician and local change maker
Ryan will talk about Upstream (www.thinkupstream.net), a movement to create a healthy society through evidence-based, people-centred ideas. Learn how this group is making a positive change throughout Canada by drawing attention to the social and economic factors that keep people healthy!

Thursday, May 22nd, 12 noon

Financing of Health Care with Stan Rice, President Saskatchewan Health Coalition
The Federal Health Accord expires March 31, 2014, bringing significant changes to the amount of money transferred to provinces to fund health care. Stan will discuss how the Health Coalition is responding and other advocacy work on their agendas.

Wednesday, June 18th, 12 noon

For more information phone Member Relations at 306-664-4243.
Gifts to the Saskatoon Community Clinic Foundation

In Memory of:

Joyce Amundson from Ruben Amundson
Bette Atkinson from Wenda Atkinson
Margaret Carman from Kenneth Carman
Mary V. Chapman from Harold Chapman
Joe Cooper from Margaret Cooper
Doris Curtis from Eileen & Glenn Archdekin, Betsy & John Bury
Doris & Fred Curtis from Wenda Atkinson
Dr. Carla Eisenhauber from Clinton Hilliard, Margaret Cloak, Judith Ann Martin
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Hal Shockey from Joyce Loraas
Alexander Smith from Carol Glazer
Terry Stevens from Judith Ann Martin
Brenda & Marie Thiessen from Stuart Thiessen

Donations:


Thank you for your generosity ~ November 6, 2013 – February 20, 2014