

AN EVALUATION OF AN EMBEDDED COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM IN A RURAL FAMILY HEALTH TEAM



WHAT IS COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE?

Community Paramedicine involves the expansion of paramedic roles beyond emergency response to increase patient access to preventative care, primary health care and basic social services.

Community Paramedicine aims:

- Respond to the unmet health needs in communities.
- Improve patient well-being and quality of life.
- Reduce the need for emergency department, hospital and clinic visits.



EMBEDDED COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE

How can Community Paramedicine be embedded in a Family Health Team?

- Community Paramedics see patients from the Family Health Team roster.



- Community Paramedics become part of the interdisciplinary Family Health Team.

- Community Paramedics gain access to Family Health Team expertise and their Electronic Medical Record system.



STRENGTHS OF A COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM



- Community Paramedics gather valuable information during home visits (such as food access, dietary habits and medication adherence), helping the team to better understand and care for patients.

- Through home visits, Community Paramedics extend the reach of Family Health Teams to see more high-risk patients.



- Community Paramedics support person-centred care in the community and can reduce burden on doctors and nurses.

BENEFITS FOR YOUR FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

How can embedding a Community Paramedic benefit your team?



- Improves access to care and frequency of monitoring complex patients that are hard to reach.

- Reduces burden on healthcare providers through increased service capacity.



- Home visits by Community Paramedics offer unique insights into patient care needs that may be masked in clinical settings.

“Having eyes and ears in that patient’s direct environment can allow us, as healthcare providers, to make better decisions about their healthcare” (Clinic Staff)

ABOUT THE EMBEDDED COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM



- The team consists of two full-time Community Paramedics, a scheduler and a doctor liaison.

- Each paramedic has a caseload of approximately **50 patients (top 2% highest need patients of the Family Health Team)**.



- Paramedics make **3-5 home visits daily** with each lasting between **30-75 mins**, along with phone check-ins.

- Funding is obtained through Ontario Health & a local hospital.



- Total cost: **100k** per paramedic (salary + administrative fees).

FIRST STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING AN EMBEDDED COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM IN YOUR FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

- (1) Find and allocate the necessary funding.
- (2) Reach out to your local Community Paramedicine program to discuss the possibility of embedding a Community Paramedic into your team.
- (3) Encourage scope of practice conversations to support team collaboration.

RE-AIM EVALUATION



The RE-AIM framework was used to guide the evaluation of the Family Health Team’s embedded Community Paramedicine program across 5 dimensions: **Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance.**

REACH

Community Paramedics provide care for older and more complex patients of the Family Health Team



- Average age: **78**
- Multiple chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, dementia, stroke, mental health, etc.)
 - Average of **2.7 chronic diseases/patient**

ADOPTION

Benefits to embedding Community Paramedics as a Family Health Team member:

Benefits to Paramedics:



- Increased scope of practice (e.g. screenings & chronic disease management).

- Increased access to patient charts through the Electronic Medical Record system.



- Integration into an interprofessional care team.

“I like the idea of working with not just the patient themselves, but their entire care team, their family members, getting rapport.”
(Community Paramedic)

Benefits to Family Health Team:

- Can decrease burden on doctors and nurses through assessment of high-risk patients.



- Offer flexibility to patients who have difficulty attending clinic visits (mobility/transportation).

- Reassurance about patients’ ability to manage their health at home.



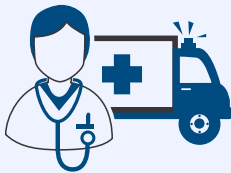
EFFECTIVENESS

Home visits by Community Paramedics can:

- Provide doctors with a holistic understanding of patients’ individual health situations, allowing for more tailored care plans.

“The piece of the picture that we get in 15 minutes in the office is really limited, and the information gathering that the paramedics can do in the home is really valuable.” (Family Health Team Physician)

The program enables Community Paramedics to:



- Increase service capacity of Family Health Team and external health services (hospital & home care) through more frequent patient monitoring.
- Coordinate patient care with doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and other community services.

IMPLEMENTATION



- Family Health Team offers site specific training to build on Community Paramedicine education programs.

Some questions to consider before implementation:

- Who are your high-need patients?
- How many Community Paramedics do you need?
- How will Community Paramedics communicate within your Family Health Team?

MAINTENANCE

Community Paramedics make the primary care system more sustainable and person-centred.

“Community Paramedics can improve care for some of the most vulnerable patients, who are ones who could more easily fall through the cracks in the healthcare system.”
(Family Health Team Physician)

CONTACT US

If you are interested in learning more about our evaluation of the embedded Family Health Team’s Community Paramedicine program please contact the Center for Care Access and Equity Research:

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