

focus on

Serious Injury Care

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The challenges and rewards of pediatric care

Bayshore Home Health provides care to people of all ages – including the very young. Each year, through its Optimacura Pediatric Program, the company serves hundreds of children who have been injured, are recovering from surgery, have a chronic or terminal illness, or live with a disability. These fragile patients need specially trained health care providers. In many cases, their families also require assistance to access funding to pay for their child’s care.

The purpose of the pediatric care program is to offer respite for parents, many whom are experiencing stress and are exhausted from the burden of caring for their children around the clock, seven days a week.

“Parents need someone specifically trained to provide care to their child,” says Anne Goodine, Director of Clinical Management for Pediatric Services at Bayshore’s branch in Burnaby, B.C. “Children cannot be responsible for directing their own care as adults do. Families need to have someone with specific training who can step up and temporarily take over if the parent needs a break or is otherwise not available.”

The Burnaby branch serves children in the B.C.’s Lower Mainland. Ten clinical

managers, all of whom are experienced pediatric nurses, plan and monitor the care of about 120 young patients. “They are the most fragile children in the province, with the most complex care needs,” says Goodine, who oversees daily operations including clinical services, scheduling and liaising with the province’s Ministry of Children and Family Development, which provides funding. “The managers work closely with each family, from admission to discharge. They’re also a clinical resource for the nurses on the team.”

Depending on the child, Bayshore staff can provide round-the-clock care in the home or daytime assistance at daycare centres and schools. This is common for children who have a tracheostomy and require ventilation. Some children receive in-home nursing visits during the day as well as at night.

Caring for children presents unique challenges. Home care staff must acclimatize to each child’s situation; his or her medical condition or disability is only the starting point. “We create a different plan for every family – each one has a different home layout and different technology. Children are in different age groups and have varying abilities,” says Dave Jones, Home Support Supervisor



at Bayshore’s Sarnia, Ont., branch. He co-ordinates care plans with case managers at the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) for clients in the south end of Sarnia-South Lambton County.

To work successfully with a child, care providers need to be familiar with the child’s growth and development. In many cases, Bayshore staff receive also training in a child’s individualized care procedures at the facility where he or she received care – for example, the

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Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto or BC Children's Hospital.

Bayshore's caregivers may be part of a larger team that includes physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, case managers, social workers and other professionals, so consistent communication is essential.

Charlene Taylor, Area Director of the Sarnia branch, adds that communication with the young clients themselves may have a learning curve. "A lot of children are non-verbal or developmentally delayed, so you have to know how the child is receiving information. When the child is trying to communicate with you, it could be through non-traditional means, such as a picture board or gesturing, so caregivers need training in that as well."

Young patients may have difficulty expressing how they are feeling. "Care providers need the skills and knowledge to pick up subtle hints that children may not be able to describe to you," Goodine says.

Bayshore strives to offer continuity of care to its clients, and this is even more important in pediatric cases. "We have a small group of staff – three to 10 people, depending on how many hours the family receives – trained to provide care to each child and family. Each person must have an orientation to that child, working alongside people already on the team," says Goodine, adding that the Burnaby branch is very selective in hiring pediatric caregivers.

Branches receive ongoing educational support from Bayshore's National Service Centre in Mississauga. Carol Weldon, Clinical Practice Leader, oversees the pediatric program. "We're making policy and procedures pediatric-friendly, so nurses don't need to figure out how the adult versions apply to children."

Focus on Serious Injury Care is published by Bayshore Home Health for its serious injury clients and health care professionals. The views and opinions contained in *Focus on Serious Injury Care* are not necessarily those of Bayshore Home Health. For more information about this newsletter or to submit story ideas, please contact Bayshore Home Health's Marketing Department at 905.822.8075/1.800.668.9490 or email mmamak@bayshore.ca.

Bayshore Home Health – a leader in serious injury home care

Bayshore Home Health is a Canadian-owned company and has been a trusted provider of home and community care services since 1966. It operates more than 50 home care offices and 20 community care clinics nationally, and works with many organizations that deliver specialized home care services to clients with serious injuries, including workers' compensation boards, auto insurers, rehabilitation service providers and government care agencies. To learn more about any of the services listed below, please call 1-866-265-1920.

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Weldon and her team put together educational packages for clinical managers to deliver to staff. Subjects include conflict management, advocating for a child and gaining parents' support and respect. "It's about reading people and understanding how each family works, and they are all different," Weldon says.

A large part of Bayshore's pediatric work is educating families on their options – many aren't aware that home care is available or that they may be eligible for at least partial funding. "We try to build good relationships with parents. We educate them on where to go for services," Jones says. "We've advocated for cases that have slipped through the cracks. We support them and let them know we're here to help."

Parents often assume care of their child from birth, and typically they begin to burn out when the child is eight to 10 years old, Taylor says. "By then, the parents are too tired to look for help – they're absolutely exhausted. And that's when we can step in and say, 'We can help you organize where you need to ask for help, so it's easier for you to go forth and advocate on your own behalf,'" she explains.

"We provide that moral support. Certainly, it's a slow process. Sometimes parents apply for funding but it takes time. Sometimes parents get a few hours of care through CCAC, and it's not enough, so they want to add hours or perhaps they need funding for assistive devices such as a wheelchair. It's about supporting parents to make sure they have the best things for their kids."

In many cases, getting enough funding to meet a family's needs is an ongoing issue. Pediatric care is a "grey area" in the health care system, says Lisa Harris, Home Support Supervisor at the Sarnia branch, who helps clients seek financial support. "Parents become the primary caregivers, and because the government sees them that way, extra funding is a challenge. So when one parent wants to work, even if they have private insurance dollars, they may not be able to access them" she explains. "Our goal is to help the family get back to as much of a normal life as possible by reviewing their funding options."

Harris encourages families to keep applying even if they have been turned down. "You might get a 'no,' but you might get a 'yes,'" she says. "If you're not sure what funding you're eligible for, call us and see if there's anything out there we can help with. The majority of the time, we can find a way to help."

Despite the challenges, many health professionals make pediatric care their life's work. "It's a wonderful calling for a nurse to work with these kids. It's very satisfying to be able to give parents a break," says Goodine. "We have many children who need palliative care, and it's a privilege to work with and support these families, and to be included in the last days of a child's life."

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