CARING FOR OURSELVES: RECOGNIZING AND MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.” – Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen

Most people who choose to enter the healthcare field do so to help others. As healthcare practitioners, we must balance meeting the physical and emotional needs of our patients with our own health and well-being. When our life circumstances and/or working conditions compromise our empathy and compassion for others, we can develop compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue refers to the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their career, according to renowned Compassion Fatigue Specialist Françoise Mathieu.

Sometimes called the “cost of caring,” compassion fatigue affects everyone to varying degrees, and at different times within a work group, some will feel well and fulfilled, some will feel some degree of compassion fatigue, while a few will feel its full effects.

While everyone has their own warning signs of compassion fatigue, symptoms may include heightened anxiety, impaired decision-making ability, increased absenteeism and anger and irritability. “It can start with increased cynicism and decreased enjoyment at work and at home, and, if left unchecked, can lead to depression, secondary traumatic stress and stress-related illness,” says Merv Wilson, Manager, Spiritual Care.

Learning to recognize an escalation of symptoms can help individuals implement remedies before compassion fatigue hits the critical point. “Recognizing your own personality and coping style, your life stressors (caring for children and/or parents, marital condition, etc.), as well as conditions at work (organizational and technological changes, type of work and associated risks, work group dynamics, etc.) are key to determining when to implement personal strategies and/or seek professional help,” says Linda Morrison, Director, Organizational Development.

On a personal level, boost your resiliency by making sure to balance emotionally-taxing and restorative activities. Bluewater Health is participating in a series of workshops (sponsored by the Healthy Living Team) with Françoise Mathieu on September 27 and 28 to learn more about compassion fatigue:

1. Anyone in the Bluewater Health family is welcome to drop in to attend one of three sessions – Running On Empty: Organizational Solutions and Strategies to Manage Compassion Fatigue – scheduled for Wednesday, September 28 (12:30 to 1:30, 2:00 to 3:00 or 3:30 to 4:30 pm) in the Auditorium (Level 2, London Building), designed to help caregivers identify:
   • Life circumstances and working conditions that may make them disposed to compassion fatigue.
   • Their own signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue.
   • Self-care strategies that form a personal “compassion fatigue prevention toolkit.”
   • How a culture of kindness can support us all in our health and wellness.

2. Bluewater Health is holding “A Leader’s Role Building and Supporting a Resilient Team” for leaders and professional staff on Tuesday, September 27 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at Central Baptist Church (391 London Road, Sarnia, behind the Russell St. parking lot).

3. Lambton Wellness Committee is hosting a half-day, more extensive education workshop from 8:00 to 11:30 am on Wednesday, September 28 for leaders (contact Linda Morrison to register).
Yellow Binders Save Time, Improve Efficiency and Safety

Preparing a patient chart for the OR is an important yet time-consuming process. Several forms require completion, current labs and diagnostic reports must be available, and the identification of important information such as allergies and high-risk illnesses must be communicated in order to ensure that Emily has a safe and successful surgical experience.

Staff on Inpatient Surgery and in the Pre-Admit Surgical Clinic has a standardized and efficient process for preparing patient charts for surgery. However, when patients present in the Emergency Department (ED) requiring emergency surgery, the process is not as clearly defined.

OR and Inpatient Surgery staff expressed frustration that patient charts from the ED were sometimes missing information and charts come paper-clipped together or in an envelope. This results in extra work and time to sort through the required documents, complete missing information and place the chart in proper sequence.

A group representing ED, OR, Inpatient Surgery and nurse educators came together to look for a solution. The team developed a chart preparation reference document that walked staff step by step thorough the chart preparation process.

The OR purchased some bright yellow binders to be used for patients going to the OR. The binders contain all of the necessary paperwork and are put together in the proper order. A checklist on the front of the chart outlines the documents contained in the chart, so the ED staff has everything they need in one spot. The patient's additional documents such as lab and imaging reports are added to the binder.

The binder follows the patient to the OR where papers are now contained, safe and in order; and to Inpatient Surgery where surgical staff transfer the contents to a standard inpatient chart. The surgical unit clerk wipes down and restocks the chart and returns it to the ED.

This process improvement has resulted in time saved by both the ED and OR staff, and has provided increased safety and efficiency in caring for Emily as the right information is in the right location at the right time.

Bluewater Health has earned a gold level Aster Award for the photograph titled A Precious Moment, taken by Web Communications Developer Jason Boutsayaphat, illustrating a touching skin-to-skin moment between a mom and her newborn baby.

Sharing stories and news with clear and effective words, photographs and design can inform, involve, and inspire us. Awards programs such as these give valuable feedback on our effectiveness towards that goal.

Hosted by Marketing Healthcare Today magazine and Creative Images Inc, the Aster Awards are one of the largest competitions of its kind. Aster Awards recognize outstanding healthcare professionals for excellence in advertising and marketing efforts.

Bluewater Health was judged against hospitals with 300-499 beds. A diverse panel of experts selected winning entries based upon creativity, layout and design, functionality, effectiveness, production quality and overall appeal.

This summer, Diabetes & Clinical Nutrition held their bi-annual D Gang event for young patients with diabetes. The keynote motivational guest speaker was former Olympic rower Chris Jarvis, who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age 13, and is the founder of a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with diabetes through exercise, adventure and education.

The kids took part in a discussion about carb counting and insulin with one of our registered dietitians, and faced the high ropes challenge at the YMCA Leadership Centre.
Bluewater Health is helping relieve the uncertainty and anxiety of local patients and families receiving a cancer diagnosis, through world-class care at the Cancer Care Assessment and Treatment Centre (CCATC). Generous support of community events such as the Tragically Hip concert in August and the Fore the Cure golf tournament assist fundraising efforts for Bluewater Health’s cancer program.

Specifically, the Fore the Cure tournament has supported the mammography department for the past 25 years. Over 10,000 mammograms are completed each year as the first step in breast cancer screening.

“Sarnia-Lambton residents have access to top-notch cancer services right here in our community with wait times among the best in Ontario,” says Vicki Lucas, Business Director, Surgical Program and Oncology. “In fact, we receive referrals for patients in larger centres because we can schedule surgery sooner, while providing more comprehensive navigation and support beyond diagnosis.”

Bluewater Health’s Breast Assessment Program (BAP) is affiliated with the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) with Cancer Care Ontario and accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists. Non-urgent referrals are typically accommodated in less than two weeks. Patients requiring further follow-up receive additional imaging and possible biopsy within the week, saving our patients weeks of anxiety. Pathology results are often available within 48 hours. In addition, the high-quality digital images are available immediately for Radiologist review, and can be shared with other health experts for future referrals.

Similarly, wait times for diagnostics, colonoscopy screening, consultations, surgery or systemic treatment are excellent. Despite increasing pathology volumes, our turn-around times remain under three days.

Dr. Gidwani, Medical Director, Pathology, says, “Pathological diagnosis, though behind the scenes, remains the mainstay of cancer diagnosis. I am proud of our team and our performance, and the relationships we have with all the team members caring for patients.”

Our cancer surgery wait times remain in the top 10% provincially. The Prostate Cancer Clinic was recently recognized at the Canadian Urological Association Conference for its outstanding quality performance. Prostate cancer surgery is within – or better than – provincial targets in 100% of cases. Our Prostate Cancer Clinic outpatient pharmacy service delivers the medications at the patient’s appointment, preventing treatment delays and extra trips to the clinic.

The Patient Navigator ensures timely referrals to specialists, and provides support and education through the patient’s entire treatment journey. Oncology and Prostate Cancer Clinic patients also have the benefit of Drug Access Facilitators who advocate for compassionate drug coverage and co-pay assistance and appeal insurance company denials and co-pay assistance.

For patients wanting a second opinion, Bluewater Health participates in multidisciplinary case conferences, with a panel of experts in surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, pathology, nursing, and other disciplines. The team members from Windsor, London or even Toronto review cases remotely, saving the patient from out-of-town travel. When required, this forum often results in faster referral to a regional centre.

When the CCATC launched in 2011, General Surgeon, Dr. Patrick Taylor said, “All surgeons treating cancer patients have something of a dream: that one day cancer patients’ care will be coordinated and concentrated in one place; that they will not have to travel far for care; and their wait times will be shortened.” That dream has come true in our community.

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Dear Mr. Lapaine,

I wanted to write to you to express my thoughts of my recent visits to Bluewater Health.

This spring I injured myself and was sent by my doctor to Bluewater Health for X-rays.

I had a very positive experience that day. On the day that I arrived, I waited less than 5 minutes in Patient Registration and was then transferred to the X-ray department. The X-ray staff was very professional and thorough. Upon completion of my X-ray, the technician immediately showed my X-rays to the radiologist. Only 10 minutes later the technician returned and advised me that I was being referred to see Dr. Southcott the next day.

The next day, I returned and went to the Ambulatory Care unit and was seen within the hour by the specialist despite it being an extremely busy day in that department. I was examined and had more X-rays. I was treated very well by all staff and was referred to someone for a cast.

I returned 2 weeks later, did not have to wait and was looked after right away.

For the last 3 weeks, I have been coming to the hospital twice a week for physio. I must tell you that up until this happened I have only heard negative comments about the service at Bluewater Health. I wanted to let you know that I have had nothing but excellent service, amazed at the friendliness of your staff, and the prompt and great treatments. I have dealt with your staff and volunteers in Patient Registration, X-ray, Ambulatory Care, Physiotherapy and at the Welcome Desk...all have given me the best and most positive experience.

Usually you only hear the negative feedback...but I feel that you also need to be told about the exceptional staff that you have!

Many thanks for the excellent care you have given me, and your staff needs to be acknowledged for the great job they do!

Thank you,

A grateful patient
“She used to be such a good musician until her illness. She wouldn’t even listen to music. Then you came, and after that first visit she wanted to listen to music again; she’s even trying to play her instrument a little bit.”

This is the type of story that Candace Rahn hears from her client’s families and friends almost every day. Rahn, a music therapist at Bluewater Health working on Palliative Care, knows the importance that music therapy plays in end-of-life care.

“Music and music experiences can provide an outlet for regrets, grief (sometimes very old and sometimes more recent), joys, legacy sharing and creative expression,” says Rahn. “One of the best things about music therapy at end of life is that it can be a passively-administered therapy that requires no talking or thinking from the client. The communication can happen in the moment through the music-making and listening itself.”

While Bluewater Health has been offering a donor-funded music therapy program for decades, the story really began in the 1980’s when the late Dr. Linda Bowring – an advocate in the practice of palliative medicine in Lambton County – believed that music had a power to impact patients differently than traditional therapy and counselling. As a result, she expressed a desire to continue offering such therapy to patients, specifically in palliative care, before her passing in 2003.

Today, Dr. Bowring’s legacy lives on in the program at Bluewater Health, which is currently available to approximately 120 patients in the Palliative Care unit as a direct result of donor support and the Dr. Linda Bowring Endowment Fund.

“One of the most rewarding parts of my job is creating life in a hospital room where the focus is often on death,” says Rahn. “It may be by helping a patient write a song to express a thought, feeling, emotion or wish, and witnessing their smiles and pride of their creative expression; ultimately, using music and music experiences to unite people.”

With the roll-out of our new strategic plan, Kaleidoscope of Care, in June, we made a small but significant change to our Mission: *We create exemplary healthcare experiences with patients and families every time.* The shift from “for” to “with” in our Mission speaks volumes, and acknowledges an increased focus on involving patients and families in their care.

To help embed our strategic plan and revised Mission, please ensure you have updated the statement in your email signature, and in any documents created or distributed by your department. Bluewater Health's standard email signature template is available on Inside BWH at [http://intranet.bluewaterhealth.ca/en/templates](http://intranet.bluewaterhealth.ca/en/templates).

Should you notice the old Mission anywhere else throughout the hospitals, please contact Communications & Public Affairs at ext. 4443.
Dear Bluewater Health:

On behalf of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, I am writing to congratulate you for being selected as a Lambton Public Health Tobacco-Free Champion Award recipient.

The Tobacco-Free Champion award recognizes the key roles that have been played by individuals and organizations that have reduced the influence of tobacco use in Lambton County.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to live in a place where an entire generation of young people is growing up without ever having been exposed to second-hand smoke on a bus, in their workplace, or in public areas such as a restaurant. This progress is a reflection of the hard work of the province’s tobacco control leaders and advocates, like you, who have worked tirelessly over the years to make a difference.

World No Tobacco Day is an awareness day sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and to encourage governments to establish policies to reduce smoking and other uses of tobacco. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, which was launched in 2006 to reduce tobacco use and lower health risks to non-smokers in Ontario.

The strategy plays a central role in the provinces’ continuing efforts to end the use of tobacco, the leading cause of preventable cancer. In partnership with tobacco control service delivery organizations and tobacco control advocates across the province, we have reduced smoking rates in Ontario from 24.5 per cent in 2000 to 17.4 per cent in 2014. This represents about 408,250 fewer smokers.

I would like to congratulate and thank you for your contributions towards making Ontario smoke-free.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Pisko
Director
Health Promotion Implementation Branch
Population and Public Health Division

Bluewater Health Foundation is thrilled to announce that Canadian Olympic Women’s Soccer Team head coach John Herdman will headline as keynote speaker at its annual gala on Thursday, October 13 at the Holiday Inn.

John Herdman once took a group called a “struggling squad” to one that has captured the hearts and minds of Canadians. Under his leadership, the women’s team won the bronze medal at the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympic Games, and also took a gold medal at the 2011 Pan Am Games in Mexico – the first Pan Am gold in Canadian soccer history.

In his riveting talks, Herdman, who was a nominee for both the 2012 and 2015 FIFA Coach of the Year, stresses the importance of developing a high performance culture, learning to overcome adversity with grace, and the role of leaders to inspire trust, confidence and success, whether on the field, in the workplace, or in the home.

Tickets are $250 and are available in person at the foundation office, by calling 519-464-4405, or emailing jtomkins@bluewaterhealth.ca.

Proceeds support the purchase of a new CT scanner for Bluewater Health.

Staff on Telemetry Medicine coordinated a Hot Diggety Dog Day this summer to celebrate the collaboration and efforts of staff in Telemetry Medicine (MEDT) and the Emergency Department (ED) to improve patient flow.

According to Anna Brady who coordinated the event, “I wanted to celebrate two groups of people who work really hard to keep Emily moving. Collaboration between MEDT and the ED is essential to make this happen. I wanted to let all of us know how important it is to recognize each other.”

Congratulations to everyone involved for contributing to our culture of kindness and focusing on the best possible care for Emily and her family!
A change in health condition can be devastating, especially for seniors on a fixed income. Some might not be able to return to their previous living situation on being discharged from hospital. Rather than continue their hospital stay unnecessarily, a pilot project seeks to match at-risk seniors with available beds in participating retirement homes.

“The County of Lambton received a funding commitment for two years through Ontario’s Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, or ‘CHPI,’” says Doug Ball, Manager Social Planning & Children’s Services, County of Lambton. “Rather than augment existing homelessness programs, the local service sector identified four new projects to pilot, focusing on housing first, and access to mental health services, rural transportation, navigating community services, and seniors’ homelessness through subsidized retirement home beds.” This last area was of particular interest to Bluewater Health, since access to retirement homes affects Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients in hospital.

“When patients in hospital who are medically stable are awaiting transitions to a more appropriate setting, it creates challenges in patient flow, limiting access to acute inpatient hospital beds and leaving admitted patients waiting within the Emergency Department (ED),” says Nadine Krasinkiewicz, Manager, Utilization & Patient Flow, Bluewater Health. “Through this funding and the outstanding work of the project partners, we’re able to place eligible patients in the right care, improving access to inpatient beds and reducing unnecessary waits in the ED.”

The project’s success, led by Lambton Elderly Outreach, relies on the participation of local retirement homes to provide temporary access to assisted living beds. This setting offers access to nutritionally-balanced meals, a social environment and activities, and medical attention. As earmarked beds become available, referrals from Bluewater Health and Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) can be matched very quickly, with help from the retirement homes and a subsidy from the project funding.

“By working together collaboratively with our patients, families, and system partners, we are able to successfully produce supportive care transitions for patients in our health care sector,” says Stephanie Vandevenne, Patient Services Manager, Erie St. Clair CCAC.

“Residents placed through the program, and the retirement homes, will complete evaluations to measure outcomes,” says Bill Yurchuk, CEO, Lambton Elderly Outreach. “Since this is temporary funding, we need to measure costs and savings to determine which projects are sustainable.”

“Once any system savings are known, we can identify which efforts will move forward, and how they will be funded, either through CHPI, or, in the case of health system savings, through the LHIN,” adds Ball.

“I can tell you what it has meant for me,” says one retirement home resident who benefitted from the project. “It has meant everything! I feel safe, I don’t have to worry and I have made some good friends. My quality of life has improved tremendously.”
WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

As a Bluewater Health employee or volunteer, you play a critical role in helping us to achieve our Mission, **We create exemplary healthcare experiences with patients and families every time.** Please join us in welcoming the following people to our dynamic team of healthcare professionals! Don’t forget to ‘Just Say Hello!’

Attending August orientation, front row, l-r, are Alisa Groot, RPN, Surgery; Jennifer Chad, RPN, Palliative Care; Pam Clifford, Volunteer; and Brittany Barrett, RN, Rehabilitation. Second row, l-r, are Nicole Corry, Housekeeper, Environmental Services; Rachelle Bouffard, RN, Palliative Care; Barb Bouma, Student, Medical Device Reprocessing; Sydney Cook, Volunteer; Brandee Burhoe, RPN, Cognitively Complex Care; Brooke Gerber, Counsellor, Addiction Services; and Andrew Ferguson, Social Worker, Social Work.

Also attending August orientation, l-r, are Sami Zahid, Volunteer; Patricia Lalonde, Volunteer; Leah Sioson, Medical Laboratory Assistant, Laboratory; and Lorene Wilson, Volunteer. Second row, l-r, are Kyle Louttit, Jr. Financial Analyst, Finance; Jaclyn Harper, Social Worker, Social Work; Christine Veinot, Volunteer; Dino Petrucci, Volunteer; Richard Lalonde, Volunteer; and Carman Lamb, Volunteer.

SAVE THE DATE

**LiFE** is published monthly by Communications & Public Affairs for the Bluewater Health family. Contributions, story ideas, suggestions and feedback are always encouraged and welcomed.

Deadline for submitting content is the 15th of every month - for inclusion in the next month's issue.

Please connect with **Editor, Tara Young**, at Ext. 4443 or tarayoung@bluewaterhealth.ca.

**SEPTEMBER**

**1** Men’s Health/Cancer Awareness Month
**2** Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
**5** Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

**SEPTEMBER 5**

Labour Day statutory holiday

**SEPTEMBER 10**

World Suicide Prevention Day

**SEPTEMBER 11**

Race for Health

**SEPTEMBER 11-17**

International Housekeeping Week

**SEPTEMBER 21**

Physician Recognition Awards and Patients’ Choice Award recipients announced

**SEPTEMBER 28**

Board of Directors’ meeting, 6:00 pm

Board Room, Sarnia

**SEPTEMBER 29**

Farmers’ Market at Bluewater Health
7:00 am – 1:00 pm, Atrium, Sarnia

**SEPTEMBER 30**

Shop Like Charlotte, 5:00 pm

Downtown Petrolia

Visit the Events Calendar on Inside BWH for more upcoming events.