Healthcare Excellence Canada supports essential care partners to safely re-enter health and care settings during COVID-19

New program and resources for healthcare organizations and caregivers

Ottawa, ON (April 27, 2021) – Healthcare Excellence Canada has launched a program to support the safe presence of essential care partners in hospitals, long-term care homes and other health and care settings during COVID-19, including during lockdowns.

The pandemic led to blanket visitor restrictions that prohibited essential care partners from being with loved ones in health and care settings. Although the restrictive policies were put in place with the best intentions, they have contributed to other risks and unintended harm to patients and families, as well as moral distress to staff.

To help healthcare organizations safely re-integrate, welcome and engage essential care partners as part of their care teams during COVID-19 and beyond, Healthcare Excellence Canada has launched Essential Together. This program is based on co-created policy guidance that can be applied to all health and care settings in Canada, regardless of their pandemic status.

To specifically support essential care partners with loved ones in long-term care, Healthcare Excellence Canada has also published a new resource - Safely Re-entering Long-Term Care Homes During COVID-19: A Resource for Essential Care Partners. Created by essential care partners for essential care partners, it includes detail about what to expect while entering a home and being part of the care team during the pandemic.

“Essential care partners are different from general visitors. An essential care partner is a person who provides physical, psychological and emotional support, as deemed important by a patient, resident, or client,” says Lisa Poole, who was one of the caregiver advisors who contributed to creating the resource and is advising the ongoing design of the Essential Together program.

“This can include support in decision-making, care coordination and continuity of care, including things like assistance with meals, recreation and hygiene,” Poole adds.

“Evidence suggests that with proper support and education, family and essential care partners can safely participate in care during the pandemic, contributing to better care, well-being, and experiences,” says Jennifer Zelmer, President and CEO of Healthcare Excellence Canada.

“Leading organizations have worked with their communities over the last year on creative ways to re-integrate essential care partners, practices that are evolving as vaccines roll out,” says Zelmer.

“Programs like Essential Together offer ways to share this knowledge so more people can benefit.”
About Essential Together

Essential Together is working with organizations to adapt co-created policy guidance to identify and prepare essential care partners and then support them as they enter healthcare settings, during the pandemic and beyond. There are learning bundles available with resources curated from across the country and huddles that create peer-to-peer exchanges. Organizations that formerly register for the program can receive dedicated coaching and other support.

For more information, go to the Healthcare Excellence Canada website.

About Safely Re-entering Long-Term Care Homes During COVID-19: A Resource for Essential Care Partners

This resource was co-created with a caregiver advisory group. It provides practical information and tips on:

- The roles and responsibilities of an essential care partner
- How to navigate caregiving together
- The current state of long-term care homes
- The current provincial and territorial directives.

Access this resource on the Healthcare Excellence Canada website.

About Healthcare Excellence Canada

Healthcare Excellence Canada is an organization with a relentless focus on improving healthcare, with – and for – everyone in Canada. Launched in March 2021 from the amalgamation of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, Healthcare Excellence Canada has greater capacity to support partners to turn proven innovations into widespread and lasting improvement in patient safety and all the dimensions of healthcare excellence. We believe in the power of people and evidence and know that by connecting them, we can achieve the best healthcare in the world. HEC is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada.

www.healthcareexcellence.ca

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

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