

Meet Sue Leddy, NP-PHC at the Maitland Valley Family Health Team: Optimizing Health Care through Innovative NP Practice

Nurse Practitioner Sue Leddy has proven hard work, dedication and persistence really do pay off. Today, Sue is a Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner at the Maitland Valley Medical Centre and part of the interprofessional Family Health Team in Goderich. But before there was a clinic, there was a vision, and Sue was a part of it.

As Vice-Chair of the Town of Goderich Permanent Clinic Committee, Sue provided leadership to plan, fund-raise and oversee the building of a state of the art medical clinic. Once the clinic was constructed, Sue, along with nurse practitioner Deb Selkirk and two medical colleagues worked together to develop a proposal to establish a Family Health Team. Since the program was approved in 2005, she has been working as a member of the team, which now includes 12 physicians, 3 other NPs, a registered nurse, dietitian, diabetic nurse educator, pharmacist, social worker, psychologist, support staff and health educator, who all work together to provide optimal care to patients.

“The team approach is very synergistic. We all have different skill sets and we all rely on each other” she said. “It’s to the patients’ benefit because they have access to the right provider for the right purpose at the time they need it.”

The Family Health Team’s governance model is provider-led, a not for profit organization, whose members consist of NPs and physicians. Sue was founding member of the board of directors, along with two physician colleagues, and this role has now been taken on by another NP in the clinic. Sue acts as Lead NP for the FHT.

Sue has built her own caseload of over 400 patients. During her own clinic, which runs four half days a week, Sue sees patients of all ages with a wide variety of health conditions. She provides full periodic physicals, preventative health counseling, orders and interprets diagnostic tests, and diagnoses and treats episodic illnesses and chronic diseases.

“We practice to our full scope here,” she said, adding she is pleased the nurse practitioner role in the Family Health Team has evolved in the way she envisioned.

In addition to her usual patient list, Sue provides urgent same day access for patients requiring health services. “I leave urgent care space everyday, so I can see patients who call in and need to be seen right away,” she said. “It helps keep them out of emergency departments.”

When she’s not providing services to her own patients, she and the other NPs provide additional clinics for patients of their physician colleagues in “pod clinics”, where they can provide timely primary health care services as required. These additional services could include IUD insertion, prenatal visits, well baby visits, chronic disease management, urgent care, preventative care, smoking cessation counseling, etc.

Sue works with other team members to develop formal programs to optimize patients’ access to health care and information. Some of the specialty programs include diabetes management and

care, weight management, smoking cessation, prenatal care, and geriatric assessment. Future programs to be developed will focus on COPD and congestive heart failure.

Despite admitting to being exhausted at times, Sue said it's all worth it in the end. "It all goes back to what nursing is all about – helping people by being their advocate and teaching them how to maximize their health."