

WELLNESS: Skype-like service from York hospitals

New telemedicine nurses provide access to specialists

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Central Local Health Integration Network hired five new telemedicine nurses to provide you easier access to physician specialists.

The new nurses are stationed in Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, Markham Stouffville Hospital and the Canadian Mental Health Association — York Region and Toronto branches. The new hires are part of the expanded care delivery available at more than 68 sites across Central LHIN.

Telemedicine is a form of telehealth, with live, two-way videoconferencing at the hospital sites, Markham Stouffville Hospital clinical telemedicine professional practice leader Ann Marie Havery said.

The Skype-like service is part of the Ontario Telemedicine Network and is equipped with the latest technology for virtual patient consultations, assessments, training and knowledge exchange, including a hand-held camera that can zoom in on a patient's wound, Ms Havery said.

"It can save time, costs and travel and it reduces the stress of patients," she added.

Ms Havery's first telemedicine patient at Markham Stouffville Hospital was an elderly woman who needed to see a physician specialist in downtown Toronto, but had no rea-

sonable means of transportation.

That was the case for Sutton resident Norm Charles, who has been using telemedicine for some time.

'It can save time, costs and travel and it reduces the stress of patients.'

Mr. Charles goes to Southlake about once a month and was there last to see his neuropsychiatrist in Toronto for severe migraines.

"It saves me four hours and \$50 a (trip)," Mr. Charles said of the service. "It's quite handy for me."

It's also easier to talk to his doctors via video, Mr. Charles said, noting it's less intimidating.

To provide telemedicine access for resident clinical appointments, specialist care and staff education, Southlake has partnered with six Central LHIN long-term care homes: Aurora Resthaven, Bradford Valley, Cedarvale Lodge, Good Samaritan Nursing Home, King City Lodge Nursing Home, River Glen Haven Nursing Home and Southlake Village.

Eight of the 12 long-term care homes in the catchment area of Southlake and Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston are equipped for telemedicine service.

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