

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Oct 23, 2007

For more information contact:
Michael Mazza
Chief Executive Officer
519 245-5295 ext. 5592

MHA COMPLETES ACCREDITATION REVIEW

During the week of October 15, 2007, Four Counties Health Services (FCHS) and Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH), who form the Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) completed the Accreditation Process for the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA). During the week, all aspects of the hospitals' operations from Governance to Admitting, from Surgery to Diabetes Education, underwent a comprehensive and thorough review by the Accreditors. The MHA was fortunate to have two experienced Accreditors guiding them through the process.

Juanita Barrett is President and CEO of her own company, Ideal Health Solutions Inc. Prior to this, she held a number of senior positions with various Health Care and Community Services organizations. She holds a Masters of Business Administration degree and is a registered nurse. She is a CHE in the Canadian College of Health Services Executives (CCHSE) and has worked on the executive with health and government organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario.

Dr. Richard Gibson assumed the position of District Chief of Staff in the Capital District Health Authority, Nova Scotia effective July 1, 2007. His Department represents over 400 Family Physicians practicing in the community and in hospitals from small rural to large urban settings. Prior to this, Dr. Gibson spent 8 years as the Chief of Staff at Dartmouth General Hospital, a 140 bed community hospital. In addition to his administrative duties, Dr. Gibson continues to practice part-time as a Family Physician in Dartmouth, providing both office and hospital-based care. His past clinical experience includes obstetrics and several years as an Emergency Physician. Dr. Gibson holds a BSc (General Studies) and MD from the University of Calgary. He completed his Internship and Family Medicine Residency at Dalhousie University. Dr. Gibson was made a Fellow of the College of Family Physicians of Canada in 2002. He is also a member of the Canadian College of Health Services Executives.

Juanita Barrett and Dr. Richard Gibson spoke highly of the innovations they found within the Alliance. Coming in for particular praise was the MHA's Diabetes Education Program which has seen a 153% increase in patient visits over the last year. Dr. Gibson highlighted the program for two particular areas of achievement. One relates to the extraordinary and powerful linkages being made with local First Nations Groups and the second relates to an evaluation of whether the program improved the health of people with diabetes. This study will take place over a five year period. Dr. Gibson also focused on changes in the way Laboratory Services are provided at FCHS. He indicated that many small hospitals are eliminating local laboratory procedures due to low volumes and escalating costs. He noted that the MHA has taken the opposite strategy with the installation of technology which makes laboratory results available for physicians in a matter of minutes. He praised FCHS's Point-of-Care testing for laboratories, calling it a provincial, if not national model for how things really should be done in small hospitals.

Juanita Barrett commented on the cooperative team environment at both sites but particularly focusing on SMGH. In many hospitals, the various disciplines work in isolation. It is so refreshing to see nurses, therapists and physicians actively engaged in seamless strategies to deliver good patient care. She also commented on the significant work done at the hospitals related to patient safety. Ms. Barrett has been doing surveys of hospitals across Canada since 1992. She indicated that in all her years she does not believe she has seen a hospital with a more comprehensive strategy to address patient safety issues. She acknowledged and congratulated Nancy Maltby-Webster on her appointment as Co-Chair of the Ontario Hospital Association Patient Safety Leadership Council Committee.

The final results of the survey should be available in 6-8 weeks. The briefing by the Accreditors is not the final assessment provided by CCHSA but is rather an interim, verbal report. The surveyors identified benchmarks against other similar hospitals as an area for improvement at MHA. "While benchmarking exists in many areas of the MHA, it would be desirable to see the MHA work toward having benchmarks in every area of its operation in order to compare itself with other similar hospitals," said Barrett.
