

Chief of Staff – Four Counties Health Services
Report to the Middlesex Hospital Alliance
Annual General Meeting
June 9, 2009

The 2008/2009 year had been another good one for Four Counties, where we continue to provide a high standard of care to patients in our catchment area.

In September 2008 Dr. Stephen Jones relocated his office to Thamesville from the Four Counties Medical Clinic. However, he and the other four physicians who have their offices at Four Counties continue to provide inpatient and emergency department care at the hospital. Physician coverage of the emergency department has required only occasional use of locums.

Throughout the year we continued to assess and expand the array of outpatient clinics that are available at the Four Counties site. While there was no change to the continued provision of internal medicine/gastroenterology, cardiology, general surgery, and ENT clinics, the very successful dermatology clinic that was introduced last year will soon be expanded to two days a month in order to meet patient needs. In addition an innovative new psychiatry service was initiated in November 2008, by Lisa Plank, one of our nurse practitioners. The service connects Drs. Chandrasena and Fairbairn, psychiatrists in Chatham, by video link with patients at Four Counties. The patients are prepared for the tele-interview, and accompanied throughout it by Lisa Plank. This new service has been well received by patients and has been very successful. We will continue to evaluate the need for other clinics at this site.

The Diabetic Education Centre has been very well received by patients and physicians in the area. It has been an especially valuable link with the native population. The hard work of Allison Lenny and her staff has resulted in a significant increase in the number of visits to the centre over the past year.

The Vocera wireless communication system is another innovation that was introduced at Four Counties over the last year. This pocket-sized device, similar to the ones used in “Star Trek” permits two-way voice communication between staff members, thus improving communication and safety. Unfortunately the present device does not allow us to “Beam anyone up”, but perhaps that will come with the next generation of the device.

Our Nurse Practitioners continue to be busy in the Four Counties Medical Clinic as well as on the inpatient service where they provide invaluable support to the physicians in the care of patients who do not have a local physician. Lesa Marsh has been developing expanded medical directives which permit both nurse practitioners to provide a broader scope of practice to these inpatients. Lesa has also been busy with smoking cessation and outreach to Babcock’s Community Care Centre. Her work there obviates the need for many of the patients at the nursing home to be transported to the emergency department. Both nurse practitioners continue to look for new ways to serve our patients better.

Last year I reported that there had been a small increase in visits to the Emergency Department over the previous year. This year our volumes were down slightly, although this was not large enough to suggest a long term trend. It is more likely within the expected natural variation from one year to the next. However, changes in emergency department operation around the province will need to be watched closely in the coming year. The planned closure of the emergency department in Wallaceburg may result in volume increases at Four Counties.

As we look ahead to the coming year, and the financial and human resource challenges that face hospitals across the province, I am optimistic that we will continue to be able to provide high quality service to our patients, in the outpatient department, on the inpatient service, and in the emergency department.

It has been, and continues to be a pleasure serving as the Chief of Staff for Four Counties Health Services. I would like to thank the entire medical staff of FCHS for their on-going commitment and dedication.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jon Dreyer, MD, CM, FRCPC
Chief of Staff