

New Brunswick's first Mobile Health Clinic



Salvus Clinic's new Mobile Health Clinic.

A dream has finally become a reality.

Four years ago, France Maillet-Gagnon, a Horizon nurse practitioner (NP) at Salvus Clinic in Moncton, attended a Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference where large Canadian cities were sharing their innovative mobile health clinic projects. One group shared an initiative where they used vans to help provide care to those experiencing homelessness.

"It flipped a switch," said France. "It planted a seed that we should do the same here."

The Salvus Clinic provides services to those surviving and experiencing homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and substance use. Their work goes beyond health care — they provide support for other basic needs, such as housing, income security, and other barriers.

A mobile clinic enhances the work Salvus staff are doing. It allows them to provide accessible,

effective, and quality health services wherever their client is.

"We're connecting with individuals who have fallen through the cracks and are not able to access basic services," said France. "We want to connect with people and give them hope again."

During the COVID-19 pandemic more funding opportunities became available, and the Salvus team pushed to get the funding they needed to make the dream of a mobile health clinic a reality.

After two years of applying for grants and funding, the van was acquired, and staff were ready to begin providing services. Funding was provided by several sources, including the Government of Canada through Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program, Medavie Health Foundation, the Saint John Human Development Council, NB Department of Health, and private donations.

The mobile team will be comprised of a part-time Horizon NP, registered nurse, social worker, administrative support and peer navigators.

"In the few outings we have done, we have already helped avoid Emergency Department and outpatient clinic visits," said France. "This will help also reduce hospital admissions."

Along with offering primary health care, the team provides mental health and addiction services, screening services for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, harm reduction education, access to contraceptives, prenatal care, vaccinations, and more.

The funding has been provided for 18 months, but the Salvus team hopes the success of the clinic will help secure long-term funding.

"As we hire more staff and increase collaboration with other community partners, we're hoping to increase not only health and social services, but also extend hours to increase accessibility," said France. "I can't even imagine the impact the mobile clinic will have with the collaboration of community partners to increase health and social services."

The Salvus team dreamed big and it's making all the difference to those in need.



Horizon Nurse Practitioners France Maillet-Gagnon and Annette Taylor inside the mobile clinic.



The Salvus team in front of the new mobile clinic.

Pedalling through the road to recovery: Bed bikes keeps SJRH ICU patients moving

A patient admitted to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) might not think a bike will be part of their recovery, but that's just what some have experienced over the last few months — and it's making a difference for patients who are in bed for long periods of time.

The ICU at Horizon's Saint John Regional Hospital (SJRH) recently purchased a new piece of equipment — a bed bike. A bed bike is a wheel with bike pedals that attaches to the foot of a hospital bed.

Keeping their bodies moving helps patients who have become deconditioned due to their critical illness to build back their strength and reduce the risk of additional complications like pneumonia and ulcers.

Dr. Christopher White is a Cardiac Surgeon at SJRH and recommended a bed bike be purchased for use in the ICU.

As patients who are critically ill and dependent on advanced life support measures for a prolonged period of time (weeks) improve, they transition to the rehabilitation phase of their care. In many cases, these patients are so weak that they are unable to even sit at the edge of the bed or stand without the assistance of multiple health care professionals.

"These patients are completely dependent on our nursing and physiotherapy teams, who go above and beyond to facilitate their recovery. However, their rehabilitation needs go far beyond what our busy health care teams can provide. The bed bike allows patients to exercise throughout the day, in between scheduled physiotherapy sessions," Dr. White says.

Kelly Pinder, nurse manager of Medical Surgical ICU and 3BS at the SJRH, along with Dr. White and other members of the team,



Patient Andrew Creighton bikes anywhere from two to seven kilometers per day on the bed bike!



From left: ICU patient Andrew Creighton uses the bed bike, while Ruth Barry, Charge Nurse, S/MICU, Horizon's Saint John Regional Hospital and Jessie Coleman, registered nurse, look on.

worked with the first patient to use the bed bike.

Terry Stacey had a serious cardiac event requiring significant life-saving medical intervention. As a result, he was unable to get out of bed for an extended period of time. When Terry had enough strength, the bike was attached to the bed, and he began to pedal.

Terry recalls being very weak and at the beginning, could only use the bike for a few minutes at a time. However, he soon noticed a difference and was able to stand, then walk with assistance, and could bike for longer periods.

As he built up his strength, Terry says he



Patient Terry Stacey uses the bed bike while being cheered on by his wife, Nancy Stacey, left, and Ruth Barry, Charge Nurse, S/MICU, Horizon's Saint John Regional Hospital.

liked to joke with staff about where he was travelling to on the stationary bike, saying, "I'm going to Quispamsis today!"

Kelly remembers his reaction to using the new equipment as very positive.

"Just the smile on his face, being able to use this and being able to contribute to his recovery," she recalls.

Dr. White believes the bike aided Terry's recovery, as he was discharged from ICU more quickly than expected.

In addition to a reduced stay in the ICU, this equipment provides an opportunity for independence and activity for patients who are reliant upon staff for things they would often do for themselves.

"He shared that he had more dignity and control over his life," said Kelly.

Andrew Creighton, a patient in the SJRH ICU (who bikes anywhere from two to seven kilometers per day!) says it has been helpful not only to his physical strength, but to his mental strength as well.

"(The bike) has given me feelings of hope, of self worth," he said. "The bike helps reduce my anxiety, especially when I am alone. It keeps me preoccupied where I can focus on my recovery."

Terry, now home and continuing his recovery, wishes he could have brought the bike with him and hopes it will continue to benefit other patients.

"I recommend it, 100%," he said. "Do what you can and pedal away."