

Community Bulletin March 28, 2018

Northern Health has been working hard to recruit additional physicians to Terrace. We have recruited 1 new physician coming to work in the ER, and 3 Canadian-trained International Medical Graduates beginning in summer. We are actively recruiting to fill the entire complement as quickly as possible.

What are we doing?

While physician practices are private businesses, we are working with the Terrace physician community to recruit to their practices. We are also aware that there are plans for two new physician clinics in the community (please keep an eye out for announcements about these clinics in the coming months). Northern Health is committed to supporting these new clinics as well as the existing clinic, Park Avenue Medical. We are also keen to support a smooth transition for physicians as they develop their new practices, and we will be supporting that process.

In addition, we are finalising, with the approval from the Ministry of Health, an expanded funding model for emergency room coverage for family practice physicians. We have recruited one physician to work in this new model, and we expect that other physicians will be attracted to the community as a result of this model of payment. We are also working with Terrace physicians and the community to examine other providers that may be able to support the provision of primary care services to the community, such as nurse practitioners as part of our overall planning.

That said, there is still work to do. Recent physician departures have put Terrace in the position of needing to recruit approximately 14 to 16 new family physicians in total to meet the targeted complement for a community of the size of Terrace. We continue to recruit physicians on a part-time or interim (locum) basis to fill gaps in communities (such as Terrace) that might not have enough at the moment. These physicians can meet some of the community needs while we recruit permanent physicians to practice in the community.

We have a robust recruitment approach to attract new physicians to the community. Working with our Northern Health physicians, we are canvassing the country at events to attract new or practicing physicians to move to the community. Highlighting a commitment to a new hospital in Terrace will certainly aid in attracting physicians.

In addition, we are engaged with the community and other stakeholders. The community is taking a lead role in developing a recruitment and retention strategy for physicians and we are supporting that process and work. Multi-stakeholder strategies have been very successful in other communities.

Northern Health partners with the Practice Ready Assessment BC (PRA-BC) program to bring new family physicians to the North. The PRA-BC program, funded jointly by the Ministry of Health and Doctors of BC, has placed 33 new family physicians in rural communities throughout the North. As of January 2018, 28 UBC IMG residents with a 2-year return of service have chosen to fulfill their return of service in Northern Health, including four in Terrace.

What do I do if I don't have a family physician?

We are working with community physicians to establish programs to meet the needs of people who current don't have a regular doctor. Those initiatives will be communicated as they are formalized in partnership with the physicians in the community.

If people need health advice, they can call **HealthLink BC (8-1-1)**, or visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca for non-emergency health information from nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists 24 hours a day, seven days per week. The health care professionals working for this service will be able to provide advice on the level of care required.

Patients who aren't sure whether their condition warrants an emergency room visit, or who need health advice can also call HealthLink BC (8-1-1), or visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca, but If at any time you believe you require urgent medical attention, do not hesitate to go to the emergency department, or call 9-1-1 for transportation.

If you have a primary care physician (family doctor), it is always best to see them in a primary care clinic. ER physicians are tending to emergency care needs and may not be the same physician you know, and who is familiar with your case history. A visit to the ER is appropriate if you are experiencing a sudden and/or unusual change in your health.

We recognize that this is a challenging situation for all community members. We are working with the community, the Ministry of Health, physicians and other partners to attract and retain physicians in Terrace.

If you have questions, please contact:
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