Dear Marlene:

Re: Newsletter

Greetings from Edmonton, the sixth largest metropolitan area in Canada. In 2008, the percentage of residents age 65 and older was approximately 11.7%. Edmonton is facing the same demographic trends as other areas in Canada. A well-integrated system exists with regards to the delivery of psychogeriatric care in Edmonton. Psychogeriatric services are provided from three different sites, those being Alberta Hospital Edmonton, the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital and the Regional Mental Health Program.

Alberta Hospital Edmonton provides specialized interdisciplinary assessment and treatment for patients aged 65 and older with mental health concerns. There are 106 inpatient beds with two admission units and two longer stay units. We are a “facility” as defined by the Mental Health Act and, thus, patients certified under the Act who are over the age of 65 can be admitted. Affiliated with Alberta Hospital Edmonton is an outpatient program, Community Geriatric Psychiatry. This clinic is off-site, in an office building occupied by a number of medical specialists and provides assessment and treatment in the community for patients with mental health concerns as well as post-hospitalization follow-up. There are nine full-time equivalent nurses. There are approximately 450 active files at any one time. Also affiliated with Community Geriatric Psychiatry are Day Programs on two sites, one in Edmonton’s north end and one in south Edmonton. There are five physicians who split their time between inpatient units at Alberta Hospital Edmonton and the outpatient program.

The Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital has an inpatient service of 22 beds. It has a comprehensive multidisciplinary Day Program called START Psychiatry which is attended by psychiatrists on a regular basis. The multidisciplinary team is paramount and there is a strong affiliation with geriatric medicine.

The Regional Mental Health Program offers outpatient assessment and follow-up of the psychiatically unwell over the age of 65 via their geriatric psychiatry service. This community program provides goal-directed treatment and services for seniors with mental health concerns.

Telepsychiatry is done at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital site as well as Alberta Hospital Edmonton. Coverage for Long Term Care and Designated Assisted Living beds is provided by the Continuing Care Psychiatric Consulting Service (CCPCS). This is a team of nurses that covers the region geographically. Each nurse is assigned to a psychiatrist. Geriatric psychiatrists provide half-day consultative services to various Long Term Care and Designated Assisted Living facilities in the region every week. While there
is not a fellowship program in Edmonton, there is a strong residency program affiliated with the University of Alberta. Residents split their rotations between Alberta Hospital Edmonton and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, having exposure to both inpatient and outpatient work. In the region, there are a number of specialized units within the Long Term Care system, including a Mental Health Unit for chronically mentally ill patients requiring long term placement without dementia, a Behavioural Assessment and Stabilization Unit for patients with moderate to severe dementias as well as a Brain Injury Unit.

Unique to our region is a daily teleconference between Alberta Hospital Edmonton, the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital and Regional Mental Health Program at which time all new referrals are discussed. This provides for the elimination of duplication of service if more than one program has received a referral on a given individual and ensures that the the service that is most appropriate to address the needs of the patient receives the referral. Also unique to our region is the Seniors Mental Health Planning and Coordinating Committee, a committee with representatives from various agencies and care providers, which meets once per month to discuss regional initiatives pertaining to seniors mental health needs.

Challenges in our region remain the under 65 dementia population as well as recruitment. Pursuant to recent Royal College changes, we are looking forward to six-month rotations for our residents starting in 2010 although manpower will be tight given the size of the residency program here. All-in-all, the 10 geriatric psychiatrists in the region find the environment very collegial. The services are integrated and flexible, and we feel we are able to provide excellent care to our patients in this region.

I can be reached at michael.buchinski@capitalhealth.ca.

Sincerely,

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