



Kathy's Corner

By Kathy Peters
GHHN Director

As the new Executive Director of the Greater Hamilton Health Network, I couldn't be more excited by the commitment, compassion, and collaborative spirit of the GHHN partners, staff, and our broader communities. I've officially completed 4 weeks in this new role and in many ways, it feels like I have "returned home". The spirit to serve our communities with collective impact is alive and well here in Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest.

In the coming months we will be planning for our 2026-27 Strategic Priorities. We will be working with our Board and councils to ensure our future work is impactful to the priority populations most in need of coordinated and connected

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Partnership Meeting

Our next Partner Meeting will be taking place March 31st from 12pm - 1pm via Teams.



GHHN Careers Page

Visit our career page to view GHHN and partner opportunities. Visit [here](#).



Kathy Corner

Continued...

health and social services.

Although, it has been a busy month of learning and meeting new health and social system partners, I am ready to roll up my sleeves with our partners, patients, families and carepartners to co-design a more connected and coordinated local healthcare system that works for all.

17th GHHN Women's Health Days

Megan Lynch

The 17th GHHN Women's Health Days will take place at Putman's YWCA on March 25-26, 2026 from 1-4pm. The purpose of these events is to provide trauma-informed health care directly to women and gender-diverse individuals in a low-barrier, integrated, and accessible manner. The population served is individuals experiencing homelessness or not accessing traditional healthcare.

Services: These events include primary care from physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, harm reduction and peer support as well as:

- Cervical screenings and mammograms
- Free contraceptives and testing
- Mental health and addiction counseling
- Vaccines
- Food, hygiene, and clothing donations

We would like to thank one GHHN volunteer for provide warm knitted items to be given out at the next event. Our community is truly Building Community Health Together. For more information email megan.lynch@ghhn.ca.



Shelter Health Network Celebrates 20 Years

Taken from a post by Dr. Myles Sergeant, HHS & SHN, with permission

In 2005, Dr Myles Sergeant was the medical director of a new initiative in Hamilton: the Shelter Health Network (SHN), believing that shelter was as essential as medical care for people experiencing homelessness.

At the time, "social medicine" was called inner city medicine. SHN started as an idea between Dr. Dale Guenter, Dyanne Symogas, and Myles. They connected with the local housing experts and set up clinics in shelter basements (Good Shepherd, Wesley Urban Ministries, Mission Services, Salvation Army) and connected with inpatient programs like the Managed Alcohol Program and Transitional Beds. SHN provided services in partnership with the Hamilton Street Outreach team.

SHN relied heavily on volunteers, and early funding applications emphasized reduced ER visits, ambulance use, and hospital admissions. In the early years, growth was rapid - from 4 sites to 18 in the first 5 years to meet the urgent need in the community.



Twenty years later, social medicine is mainstream, yet people who are unhoused or precariously housed continue to face barriers to accessing primary care and the housing shortage has only worsened.

The SHN has continued to expand our services to provide low barrier, stigma-free care to the underhoused via a network of 24 clinics and 36 clinicians, connected by a shared electronic medical record. Working in partnerships with local shelters, supportive housing providers, drop-in centres, mental health service providers and addiction treatment centres as well as providing community outreach, we strive to "meet people where they are at" both literally and figuratively. Thousands of lives have been impacted and countless hospitalizations avoided.

The current SHN lead physician, Dr Karen Busche, is excited to see where the next 20 years take SHN. For more information on SHN visit [Shelter Health Network](#).





Connect My Health Reminder

Use [ConnectMyHealth](#) to view your health records, and truly empower your health journey. ConnectMyHealth is a digital health solution that provides you with an online, single access channel to view your health records from participating hospitals in Ontario Health West Region. ConnectMyHealth can be used on desktop and mobile devices from within Canada, and there's no cost to use it.

Community HealthPathways New Pathways Launched

Community HealthPathways is a web-based tool that gives primary care providers, nurse practitioners, and other healthcare clinicians quick access to evidence based clinical pathways and local referral options all in one place. It supports real-time decision-making at the point of care, helping providers make confident, timely referrals that improve patient outcomes.

Providers can search by condition to find best-practice management advice, relevant referral processes, and local service details.

We are excited to share that new Pathways have launched:

- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Immunization
- Antithrombotic Drugs and Dentistry
- Infective Endocarditis Prophylaxis
- Prosthetic Heart Valves
- Dyspnea in Palliative Care

To register for HealthPathways and learn more, visit:
greaterhamilton.communityhealthpathways.org



Looking for a Family Doctor In Hamilton, Haldimand, or Niagara Northwest?

The Hamilton Family Health Team (HFHT) in partnership with the Greater Hamilton Health Network (GHHN) and the GHHN Primary Care Network, is offering a free service, GHHN Attachment Team, that connects residents of the Greater Hamilton Area to family doctors accepting new patients.

This service is part of the Ontario government's vision of attaching every person in the province to primary care by 2029. It is only available for individuals and families who do not currently have a family doctor in their area.

To sign up, first register with Health Care Connect – the Ontario Government's online portal for requesting a family doctor. Then, reach out to the Hamilton Family Health Team via phone (365-317-8117) or email (attach@hamiltonfht.ca) and they'll help you get connected.



Hospital Discharge Warming Hub

Megan Lynch

Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, The Hamilton Hub and the Greater Hamilton Health Network are partnering for the second year to create a dedicated overnight drop-in space to ensure that vulnerable individuals have a safe place to stay following their hospital visit.

Located at First Pilgrim United Church on Main Street, the warming centre opened December 19, 2025. It will operate seven days a week from 10 p.m. until 9 a.m. regardless of the temperature. Spaces will be dedicated for individuals referred to the centre following their hospital visit and is set to operate until late March 2026.

From December 19th to December 31st, 2025 the Warming Hub had 223 total visits and continues to operate at capacity.

For more information visit:
www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca



Marijke Ljogar

GHHN Manager, Environmental Sustainability

GHHN Environmental Sustainability Corner

For this edition of the Green Corner, we're featuring the important work of PEACH Health Ontario and their Guidebook Launch: Organizing Sustainable Events and Conferences For Health Care.

The guidebook was created by the Sustainable Food Services Committee, with the purpose of equipping event organizers within the health care sector with practical steps to make in-person events more sustainable as well as aligned with climate action, health equity, and environmental responsibility

Why the guidebook is needed:

- Traditional events often leave a significant environmental footprint with contributors such as: High-emission food choices, long-distance supply chains, long-distance travel, single-use plastics, and food waste
- Food systems globally are responsible for nearly one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, with meat and dairy products being major contributors

Topics Included:

- Strategies to engage with vendors and other partners before events begin
- Venue selection tips
- Menu planning resources and strategies
- Waste reduction strategies

All PEACH Guidebooks can be found [here](#).

View the new Guidebook: [Organizing Sustainable Events and Conferences for Health Care](#)



*A space to learn,
share and work
towards greener
healthcare.*

Ethics Corner

Sun Drews, HHS Ethics Fellow

Part 2: Assessing Decision-Making Capacity

In the last newsletter, we introduced Part 1, Ray--a 58-year-old accountant with poorly controlled diabetes who refuses to use insulin, saying they “don’t want needles” and will “manage with diet”. However, diet alone is no longer a safe or effective option, making insulin medically necessary. The healthcare providers must determine whether Ray has the capacity to refuse this recommended treatment. Remember: capacity hinges on two key elements – understanding and appreciation.

So, what does understanding and appreciation look like for Ray?

- Understanding: Ray can explain what insulin is, why it’s recommended for his diabetes, and what using insulin involves.
- Appreciation: Ray recognizes how refusing to use insulin may affect their health, including the foreseeable risks and consequences.

How to Assess Capacity (and Who Does It?)

- The healthcare provider proposing the treatment assesses capacity.
- Use decision-specific questions in conversation to evaluate the individual’s understanding and appreciation.
- Consider factors that might impact communication—such as language, medications, or cognitive status—and reduce barriers where possible.
- Inform the individual of findings:
- If capable, they are the decision-maker
- If incapable, decisions are made by the substitute decision-maker (SDM).
- If incapable, inform them of their right to appeal a finding of incapacity to the Consent and Capacity Board (Form C).
- Document the finding of capacity or incapacity in the health record.



Key Considerations:

Capacity assessment focuses on understanding and appreciation, not agreement with the care plan. While reasoning ability, communication barriers, mental health factors, and external influences may affect the process, they are not part of the legal test under the Health Care Consent Act. Assessing capacity is about asking the right questions and creating conditions for clear communication.

Tips for Healthcare Providers:

- Support informed consent
- Respect autonomy
- Engage SDMs only when necessary
- Foster trust and communication
- Seek guidance internally from leadership or legal counsel. For general ethics information or education – contact the Office of Ethics
- For external assistance, reach out to the Consent and Capacity Board

See [December’s Ethics Corner](#) if you missed Part 1!

Questions about Capacity and Informed Consent? Email: officeofethics@hhsc.ca



GHHN Engagement Corner

Anna Burns, GHHN Engagement and Communications Coordinator

Welcome back to the GHHN Engagement Corner! This month we wanted to highlight the GHHN Engagement Network.

The GHHN researched and engaged patients, families, carepartners, and community partners to devise a plan for network engagement across the GHHN as part of our larger engagement strategy.

The GHHN Engagement Network seeks to respect and acknowledge the existing engagement work that is taking place across Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest. The purpose of the network is not to duplicate or replace this good work but to develop a formal network where members can invite other engagement/advisory groups to participate in engagement initiatives and projects across the GHHN as needed. The network will also seek to provide support, alignment and broader depth and community representation in engagement work in alignment with the GHHN Engagement Strategy and Health Equity report.

Joining the GHHN Engagement Network

Organizations and patient advisory groups across the GHHN will be invited to join the network and will be able to make requests to other groups as well as be invited to participate in engagement initiatives and activities.

Each organization and advisor will have full discretion to decide if they will participate in each offered engagement initiative or project.

To join the network and learn more visit:

greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork.ca or email info@ghhn.ca

Looking Ahead

We look forward to connecting a strong network of people with lived and living experience. We know this work can't be done in silos, it will take the voices, experiences, and expertise of those across Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest to influence sustainable healthcare transformation.

You can find all the GHHN's Engagement Resources [here](#).



Haldimand Corner

Barbara Klassen, Co-Chair

The Haldimand Health Council (HHC) has been fortunate to welcome several new individuals to the HHC table. Dr. Jason Malenfant, Medical Officer of Health and Sarah Page, CEO of Grand Erie Public Health (GEPH), have brought a strong public health presence to the HHC table post-merger of the Brant County Health Unit (BCHU) and Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNU). In December, the GEPH presented their first Community Health Profile Report for the HHC to review. Along frequent respiratory illness trend updates to partners, including primary care practitioners, the GEPH has also had some positive news coverage for their management of a measles outbreak even amidst their merger process ([The Spectator](#) cx [Simcoe Reformer](#)).

The HHC also welcome Gina Mannen (Executive Director, Haldimand Norfolk Community Senior Support Services), Ashley Everets (Team Lead- H.A.C. – Health, Activity, Community Programs), Kerry Wetherell (Operations Manager, CAMHS-HN), Clayton Sexton (Executive Director, Young Caregivers Association), and Lynn Hinds, CEO CMHA Brant Haldimand Norfolk. We look forward to the new perspectives of these individuals as we continue to grow our work within Haldimand.

Lastly, we will celebrate with True Experience when they host their “[Coldest Night of the Year](#)” fundraiser on Feb 28th. Feel free to join us!

Stay Connected!

*The GHHN is supported by funding
from the Government of Ontario.*



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