



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 June 20

PHYSICIAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 088-13 re Physician Outreach Initiative be received for information.

Key Points

- The physician outreach initiative has been an effective way to strengthen communication and the relationship between physicians and other primary care providers in Middlesex-London and Health Unit staff.
- Physicians and primary care providers are becoming increasingly aware of Health Unit programs, services, and related evidence-based information to help inform their practice.

Background

Families recognize their physicians as a reliable source of health information, and most say they would make behaviour changes recommended by a physician. The Health Unit recognizes the importance of providing local physicians with timely information about programs and services that are available in the community. To assist physicians and other primary health care providers attain current information, the Early Years Team in Family Health Services developed a comprehensive physician outreach initiative. The first goal of the physician outreach initiative was to increase the number of physicians and primary care providers who were aware of Health Unit programs, services, and related evidence-based information to help inform their practice. The second goal was to strengthen Health Unit communication and relationships with physicians and other primary care providers in London and Middlesex.

Physician Outreach

The Health Unit plays a key role in connecting physicians with the health promotion system and provides current information on local community health issues. Strategies for communicating with physicians to influence public health practice in primary care involve a variety of approaches. Research has shown that there is a greater effect on physician learning when the interventions are interactive, use multiple methods, and are designed for a small group of physicians from a single speciality. Identified strategies for the physician outreach initiative included: print materials; professional updates; referral information; screening and decision-tools; presentations including clinical rounds; workshops and CME events; outreach visits for academic detailing; internet assisted strategies; regular mail outs including evidence-based Health Unit resources; resources for client distribution; the Health Unit Physician Resource Binder; and email updates that contain links embedded into the body of the email. Previous recommendations and literature revealed the need to prioritize and present well organized information by themes to increase physicians' perceptions of relevance. This helps physicians recognize that the information being shared is part of a unified approach to the ongoing physician outreach initiative. All correspondence was coordinated through the physician outreach lead and manager of the program.

Physician Office Visits

There is evidence that supports a shift away from physician outreach interventions of low effectiveness, such as print-only communications, and a move towards physician outreach initiatives that engage more effective

strategies which include educational office visits. In 2009, the Health Unit was selected as one of four pilot sites for the newly released Enhanced 18 Month Well Baby Visit initiative. Educational outreach visits were a recommended strategy which involved a face-to-face visit with physicians, often referred to as physician detailing, to discuss the importance of the enhanced visit for early identification of developmental concerns in young children and to provide information regarding the new fee code associated with conducting the enhanced visit. The Early Years Team incorporated this initiative into the plans for the physician office visits as physicians indicated receptiveness to this information.

Planning

The planning process included three key components:

- A review of recommendations from the two previous physician outreach summary reports;
- Physician mapping to develop an accurate, up-to-date list of local family physicians and paediatricians in relation to Well Baby/Child & Breastfeeding Clinics;
- Resource development including the Health Unit Physician Resource Binder, the Enhanced 18 Month Well Baby Visit Resource Package, Physician Survey, Scripts and Documentation.

Implementation

There were 297 physician names representing 155 primary care offices identified for outreach visits in 2010/2011. 89% of the physician practices consented to an office visit (264/297) and over 80% of the primary care offices were visited by a PHN (129/155). In total, 343 office staff participated in the office visits by PHNs. By 2011, 93% of physicians on the list had access to the Physician Resource Binder. An additional 20 physician outreach office visits were conducted in 2012. Since 2010, 365 Physician Resource Binders have been distributed and discussed in physician and nurse practitioner offices.

Opportunities/Linkages

Networking and relationship building related to the physician office visits lead to numerous opportunities to provide additional presentations and workshops to primary health care professionals regarding services provided by the Health Unit and the Enhanced 18 Month Well Baby Visit initiative. Highlights include presentations and displays at the Annual Clinical day for Family Physicians in 2011, 2012 and 2013; articles printed in the St. Joseph's Health Care Centre Partnership and Academy of Medicine newsletters; annual presentations at hospital grand rounds and to local nurse practitioners; hosting annual interactive, educational workshops for physicians with MainPro C accreditation; and ongoing physician mail outs resulting in 12,500 requests for resources from physician offices to date. A total of 31 presentations have been given to over 850 health care professionals since the physician outreach initiative began.

Conclusion/Next Steps

This physician outreach initiative has been an effective way to strengthen the partnership between the Health Unit and the local physician practices. It has resulted in increased interdisciplinary awareness among service providers and health professionals within the London and Middlesex Community. The foundation for the physician office visits has been established and physician detailing and continuing to implement multi-strategy approaches to keep primary health care providers informed remains a priority. In order to increase capacity to expand the breadth of services, this collaborative initiative will now include preconception and prenatal health topics and will fall under the leadership of the reproductive health team

This report was prepared by Mrs. Ruby Brewer, Manager, Early Years Team.

Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards:
Child Health requirement 5, 6, 7, 8