



Nurse Practitioner Led Outreach Teams: An Integrated Solution to Supporting Long Term Care Homes During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

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Learning Outcomes

1. Review outbreak challenges and solutions created by NLOT teams across Ontario to support Long Term Care (LTC) Homes during COVID-19 outbreaks including minimizing the spread.
2. Explore Nurse Led Outreach Team & Nurse Practitioners' roles including quality improvement practices and change ideas that supported LTC homes during COVID-19 outbreaks.
3. Obtain practical insight into the role and value of NLOT and Nurse Practitioners including opportunities for further expansion and implementation into LTC homes in Ontario.

Presenter Disclosures

Presenter: Carrie Heer

Relationships with financial sponsors:

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Mitigating Potential Bias:

- No bias in presentation

Presenter Disclosures

Presenter: Sheelagh Willett

Relationships with financial sponsors:

- None

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Mitigating Potential Bias:

- No bias in presentation

Presenter Disclosures

Presenter: Kathryn May

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- None

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- No financial or in-kind support
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Mitigating Potential Bias:

- No bias in presentation

Presenter Disclosures

Presenter: Dr. Kathy McGilton

Relationships with financial sponsors:

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- No financial or in-kind support
- Potential for conflict(s) of interest: None

Mitigating Potential Bias:

- No bias in presentation

Nurse Practitioner (NP) Role in Ontario

Masters degree required from a NP specific graduate education program

Autonomous and expanded scope of practice

- Diagnose and treat illnesses
- Order and interpret tests
- Prescribe medications
- Perform procedures
- Admit and discharge from hospital

Work in a variety of settings (community, long-term care (LTC), hospital inpatients, outpatients/ambulatory care, public health)

Nurse Practitioner Role & Competencies

Clinical

Research

Leadership

Consultation & Collaboration

Canadian Nurses Association, 2008; Canadian Nurses Association, 2010

Nurse Practitioner Benefits

Nurse Practitioners bring value to health care system

- Improve timely access to health care
- Reduce pressures on the health care system
- Valued and trusted by patients
- Provide preventative care
- Provide high-quality management of chronic illness

NPAO currently advocating for 1 NP per 100 residents in long-term care (LTC)

(Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario (NPAO), 2019)

Nurse Led Outreach Teams (NLOT)

- Since 2008, 18 teams established across 14 health regions to provide clinical support to long-term care homes
- Provide integrated nursing and primary health services to:
 - Avoid transfers to emergency department
 - Reduce hospital admissions
 - Reduce length of stay
- Team may have all registered nurses, all NPs or registered nurses and NPs

COVID-19 Pandemic & LTC

Long Term Care (LTC) Homes in Canada have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

More than 80% of all COVID-19 deaths in Canada and unfortunately the trend of COVID-19 transmission and mortality in LTC have continued throughout the pandemic.

Many homes were unprepared for this pandemic

LTC residents are becoming increasingly complex, unstable, unpredictable and in need of more care. Many are extremely frail, living with multiple complex chronic health and mental health conditions

During this pandemic, the NLOT team expanded their roles and responsibilities to provide additional supports and resources

(National Institute on Aging (NIA), 2021; (Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), 2020)

COVID-19 Pandemic & LTC Challenges

Resident Care:

- Aging population & medically complex

Staffing & Expertise:

- Chronic staffing shortages & agency staffing
- Variable IPAC expertise and supplies

Infrastructure:

- Class C homes with shared amenities

Leadership:

- Ongoing turnover, inconsistent messaging & direction
- Lack of onsite clinical support
- Unfamiliarity of LTC policy and practice by external supports

NLOT Roles

Many factors have led to the success in the NLOT teams supporting LTC homes, some of the roles and responsibilities have included:

- Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 within LTC homes
- Direct clinical management by Nurse Practitioners
- Supporting staff and families
- Establishing Links between fragmented systems of care

NLOT Role: Containment of the Spread

Uniquely positioned to respond; flexibility and timeliness

Direct Clinical Management

Education including IPAC and PPE use

Clinical policies and that support alignment with directives

Supportive Leadership

(McGilton et al., 2020)

NLOT Role: Direct Clinical Support

Nurse Practitioner Clinical Management and Expertise

Provision of direct clinical care (COVID and non-COVID)

- Acute and episodic
- Chronic disease management
- Palliative and end-of-life care
- Implementing strategies to reduce social isolation

Education including clinical management and care planning

Advanced care planning and Goals of Care discussions

Addressing gaps within the multidisciplinary team

NLOT Role: Supporting Staff & Families

Provision of support to staff and families

Supported staff to reduce fears and build capacity

- Education, coaching & mentoring
- Role-modeling
- Discrediting misconceptions about COVID-19
- Supported COVID-19 testing and immunizations
- Reducing moral distress

Collaborated with LTC staff to support families

- Communicating changes in condition/health status
- Establish goals of care
- Developing collaborative plans of care
- Provision of education

NP Quote

“And I did more mental health in those first four weeks with staff, than I’ve ever done before. I felt that was my main job... Because we did, we lost 30% of our workforce as well...I had an RN live with me for a while so that she wouldn’t quit.”

(McGilton et al., 2020)

NLOT Role: Linking Systems of Care

Supported establishing links between fragmented systems of care

Liaison between Long-Term Care Homes and acute care

Developing policies, strategies & algorithms to establish links between LTC & acute care

Supported emergency department avoidance programs

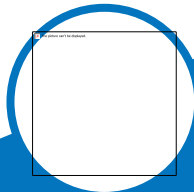
Building partnerships with other care providers and programs (e.g. laboratory, diagnostic imaging)

Increasing access with hospitals and specialists

Virtual Care Program development & implementation in LTC/Retirement

(McGilton et al., 2020)

Integration of NP & NLOT Roles



Building Nursing Staff Capacity



Implementing Best Practices & Innovation



Optimizing Resident-Centred Care



Reducing ED Transfers

Integration of NLOT & NP Roles

Collaborative and integrated approach

Change ideas and program initiatives were implemented within LTC homes supported by NLOT NPs

Development of resources and tools including pandemic playbooks, clinical algorithms and access to specialist care

Positive impact in services and care delivery to LTC residents during the COVID-19 pandemic

Regional Initiatives

Supported LTC and/or Retirement Homes in region

Identified gaps and addressed needs collaboratively with the homes

Pivoted and realigned roles to support

NLOT Outcomes

Quality Resident Centred Care within the LTC setting

Innovative practice changes improving access to care

Optimization of health system resources and supports

Reduction in Emergency Department (ED) visits and hospital admissions

(McGilton et al., 2020)

LTC & Role of NPs

LTC residents, their families and the workforces needs to be better protected and supported

Nurse Practitioners rose to the challenge of working in LTC and made contributions to promote best resident care

LTC homes should include NPs to facilitate the support of staff, families, and residents to provide the best possible outcomes

Investments must be made to educate and fund NPs to work in LTC globally

(McGilton et al., 2020)

LTC Commission

“..a number of innovative models and health care practices demonstrated their effectiveness during the pandemic and provided hope, reassurance and stability. Here, Nurse practitioners in LTC including the NLOT program was identified as one of these models of care and recommendations were made to continue to deploy these models in LTC throughout the province and increase the number of NPs in LTC.”

Future Opportunities

Funding opportunities to sustain & expand programs for increased NP presence in LTC/RH sector

Bridge/build formal relationships between LTC and acute care sector

Strengthen LTC NP/NLOT provincial network

Ongoing pandemic preparedness including provision of rapid response during outbreaks

Partner with HCPs to advocate for LTC reform

Support/develop further research for LTC sector

Extend and sustain virtual care, consultation models & enhanced access to care

Summary: Impact of the NLOT & NP Role

Collaborative innovative interdisciplinary approach to care including NPs in LTC

Integration of strategies and interventions with a focus on capacity building within the LTC home

NLOT teams supported LTC homes during COVID-19 and its related outbreaks

NPs have a unique scope of practice, which positions them well to act as leaders and build capacity in LTCHs

NLOT is an effective model and a solution to challenges in LTC that were accelerated during COVID-19 pandemic

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