

# Staff

## **Dementia care training sessions: Proactively responding to mental health knowledge gaps**

Caring for a patient with dementia can be incredibly challenging. Caring for a patient with dementia, in addition to various complex health conditions, is even more challenging. Bridgepoint's 2013 annual education survey revealed that professionals across the organization were struggling to effectively care for this growing patient population, due to a wide knowledge gap.

"The clinical manifestations of those living with Alzheimer's and other dementias can change as their condition progresses, causing communication difficulties, challenging behaviours and more," says Maya Nikoloski, Manager of Professional Practice Nursing. "We asked, how can we best provide care for individuals with dementia and appropriately manage their challenging behaviour issues?"

Staff reached out to the Alzheimer's Society dementia care training program to find the answers to that question. Offering three sessions, Alzheimer's Society educators came to Bridgepoint in June, September and November 2014, to enhance the dementia knowledge of front-line workers and to help them provide the highest-quality care. Over 40 interprofessional Bridgepoint staff were taught the general aspects and effects of dementia, as well as approaches and strategies to support care planning.

"I now feel I have the knowledge and skills to provide optimal, evidence-based care, that upholds the dignity and respect of my patients with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias," says Usman Khan, physiotherapist. "I also feel it is important to pass along this valuable information, so recently I delivered my new insights to my physiotherapy colleagues with an inservice."

Inspired by these sessions and with its participants, Bridgepoint has now developed unit based dementia support resource teams who consult on care planning. These unit champions share their knowledge, based on best practice and research, and also consult with colleagues on management and strategies. Bridgepoint will continue to work with the Alzheimer's Society to enhance knowledge and awareness, and to provide the best possible care for dementia patients.