

Bridgepoint Health launches new health information centre

Patients, families, health care providers all benefit from increased knowledge

By JOANNA LAVOIE

July 03, 2009 11:48 AM

The approach to managing or helping patients recover from complex chronic disease or disability used to be just about addressing the physical side of things.

Today, it's much more than that as a patients' mental and emotional wellbeing is also an essential part of their treatment.

A strong believer in that philosophy, south Riverdale's Bridgepoint Health recently set up a special health information centre.

The first-floor space is an excellent resource for patients, like Chris Laycock, to better understand his condition and, in turn, make better decisions about his course of treatment and next steps.

Laycock, who has spent the last seven months at Bridgepoint receiving treatment for the effects of a hereditary neurological condition, said he feels fortunate to be able to make use of such a valuable resource.

"We're all here with different afflictions. Some can work hard and recover. I consider myself lucky," he said.

"When I'm not exercising, I use the computer."

Laycock, whose disorder affects his balance and motor skills, said his road to wellness is multi-faceted.

"It's not just the physical. You gotta work on up here," he said, gesturing towards his head.

"This place has been very good for me. People don't know about all these resources. There's a wealth of information."

Sun Life Financial also believes in the work done at Bridgepoint and has donated \$250,000 to operate the hospital's free health information centre. The facility, which used to be called the Livewell Resource Centre, has now been renamed the Sun Life Financial Health Information Centre.

The web-based resource centre, which provides information about healthy living, also offers resources on pain management and stress relief, health self-assessment, drug interactions, home healthcare equipment suppliers, local support groups, and sources of income tax information for people with disabilities.

"Bridgepoint is delighted that Sun Life Financial is providing such generous support to help us in our mission to change the world for people living with complex chronic disease and disability," said Marian Walsh, Bridgepoint Health's president and CEO, in a news release. "People need an accessible source of information to assist them in living well with their multiple, life-long conditions and now they have it."

Tom Corcoran, Bridgepoint Health's chair, said this resource can help patients have more meaningful discussions with their health care providers.

"It's really important to understand what's happening to you, you're progress," he

said.

"The treatment of any disease has a lot of opinions. Patients can, at least, make informed decisions as they go along."

Stuart Monteith, Sun Life's senior vice-president of group benefits, said Jim Baille, one of the company's directors who also sits on Bridgepoint's board, suggested Sun Life should support this initiative.

It was a plan Monteith supported wholeheartedly.

"The reality is that people with chronic illnesses need to understand those illnesses," he said following a special announcement at Bridgepoint Monday morning.

Monteith said while patients can be forced to deal with some unpleasant realities related to their condition it's always better if they are prepared mentally.

"It's always better to be informed."

The health information centre is just one aspect of Bridgepoint Health LiveWell! initiative, a unique strategy for patients, staff, volunteers and community members that fosters a culture of chronic disease prevention and management.