

BUILDING BRIDGES TO BETTER HEALTH

A CHRONIC DISEASE SELF MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Chronic disease accounts for 60 per cent of hospitalizations and 33 per cent of direct health care costs in Canada today. This cost can be minimized by teaching people with chronic health conditions how to control their symptoms, make healthful choices and play an active role in their care.

Care for patients with chronic conditions can be reactive rather than preventative, with little follow-up in the community. For a person with a chronic condition, this can mean continual doctors appointments, emergency hospital visits and reliance on others for help with their condition.

Funded by the Saint Elizabeth Health Care Foundation, the *Building Bridges to Better Health* program gives the patient the knowledge of how to manage their own condition, while using a preventative approach. The program helps people who suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, and heart disease, more effectively manage their conditions and the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis.

At the end of one of our programs, an elderly woman, Betty, had tears in her eyes when she thanked the trainer for her support and the knowledge she had been given through the course. She had been to self help groups in an effort to learn about her condition and had not found what she needed or the help she deserved. She was overjoyed to be able to get the information she needed in the supportive environment provided through *Building Bridges to Better Health*.



Betty can now take an active role in her own care

This program is being offered on a charitable basis to communities throughout Ontario in partnership with Family Health Teams. The *Building Bridges to Better Health* program is based on a Chronic Disease Self-Management program that was developed at Stanford University and is facilitated by Stanford University trained Master Trainers and Leaders.

Building Bridges to Better Health teaches not only the skills needed for the effective management of a condition on a day-to-day basis, but also the skills required to maintain and/or increase life's activities. Participants will learn skills to be better able to: solve problems and meet personal goals, talk to doctors and make choices, handle stress and relax, eat well to live well, control pain, start a personal exercise plan, use medications effectively, deal with fatigue and frustration, and increase energy levels.

Studies have shown that the program helps to improve healthful behaviours, improve health status and decrease hospital stays for people who have taken the program, compared to people who have not. *Building Bridges to Better Health* gives patients the knowledge they need to improve the management of their condition, and empowers them to take an active role in their health and wellness. Investing in prevention pays off – in lower health care costs and a healthier society.

Building Bridges to Better Health

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