

## Innovation in eHealth: WOW project aims to improve health access, affordability

**Toronto, November 24, 2003** – For individuals living with a chronic health condition, access to information, education and professional care can be a challenge: health care workers are in short supply, funding is limited and the specialized expertise they require may be miles away. Now, with an innovative new approach to health care management, these individuals are discovering how greater comfort, convenience and control can improve their health and quality of life... and that has a lot of people saying “WOW!”

They’re talking about Web of Wisdom (WOW) Wound Care and WOW Cardiac Care, the focus of a groundbreaking research project that has been awarded \$180 000 of funding from CANARIE and received matching funds and an additional in kind contribution from Saint Elizabeth Health Care.

Clients aren’t the only ones talking about WOW. Health care providers – particularly those in rural and remote locations – are discovering how established linkages with experts, mentors and peers beyond their community can enable them to stay current with best practices, build local capacity and feel more confident about the care they provide.

“The WOW project demonstrates how innovation and technology can be combined effectively to deliver the latest health information, education and care to Canadians in a timely and responsive way, wherever they may live,” said Allan Rock, Minister of Industry. “This project is exciting because it has applications that Canadians can benefit from right now and in the future.”

The WOW concept, which represents the convergence of three e-learning and e-care initiatives, has been fully implemented at all of the participating test sites, including West Prince Regional Health Authority in Prince Edward Island, Anishinaabe Mino-Ayaawin Health Authority in Manitoba, and two of Saint Elizabeth Health Care’s Ontario service delivery centres, London and North York.

The Web-based applications, known as @YourSide™, @YourSide Colleague™ and @YourSide Companion™, respectively provide education and health management for individuals; e-learning and development for health care providers; and care delivery tools to enable remote monitoring, expert assessment and consultation. The dynamic combination of these applications is referred to as a Web of Wisdom.

“In our initial testing of the WOW concept, we discovered that it has the potential to truly transform care, offering greater access and affordability for a sustainable and responsive health system,” said Shirlee Sharkey, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saint Elizabeth Health Care. “This project has been made possible by the support of CANARIE and, because of that support, we’re now evaluating it on a larger scale and in multiple settings, including urban, rural and remote environments.”

Based on an innovative yet rigorous performance measurement system, the project evaluation will provide information on client outcomes, health provider outcomes, return on investment and implementation success. The final report is due to CANARIE in February 2004.

“CANARIE funds the development of applications that make life better for Canadians,” said Andrew Bjerring, President and Chief Executive Officer of CANARIE. “This project helps people in rural and remote areas overcome barriers to a better life by providing them and their care providers with access to the health care services they need.”



CANARIE is Canada's advanced Internet organization, a not-for-profit corporation that facilitates the development and use of next-generation research networks and the applications and services that run on them.

With 95 years of experience and a vision to be a phenomenal knowledge and care exchange company, Saint Elizabeth Health Care is a not-for-profit charitable organization sharing its talent and wisdom in the areas of direct service delivery, consultation and eSolutions, to support the transformation of care for individuals, families and other health organizations.

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