

Overview: West Park Healthcare Centre reported approximately 280 transfers to the Emergency Department (ED) each year, with 75% of these patients going to Humber River Hospital. Patients reported being dissatisfied, both with the experience and with the frequent—and often repeat—transfers. West Park and Humber River believed there were ways to decrease the transfers between the two sites and improve the experience for their patients. Working together on their IDEAS project, they identified improvement opportunities that resulted in an **initial 21% reduction in unplanned transfers** from West Park to Humber River. A year later, the project had not only been sustained, the **reduction in unplanned transfers had reached 30%**.

The Problem: When West Park Healthcare Centre and Humber River Hospital spoke with staff, physicians, patients and their families it was clear that something needed to be done to address the issue of transfers to ED. West Park provides rehabilitative and complex continuing care to patients who have experienced a life-altering illness or injury, such as amputation, stroke and traumatic musculoskeletal injuries. This means that most of their patients have already had extensive interaction with other health care providers and hospitals prior to arriving at West Park. When they looked at the data, two things became clear. First, some transfers were taking place unnecessarily. Second, many patients were being transferred to Humber River simply because it was the nearest hospital, when a transfer to the hospital already familiar with their care would have been the more effective option. Working together, West Park and Humber River participated in the IDEAS Advanced Learning Program to find a solution that would provide more efficient care and improve the patient experience.

“Initially, it was just the IDEAS team, but now the understanding of quality improvement has spread in our organizations and because of that we’ve been able to sustain the success...The really impressive thing is that we’ve been able to avoid the ED altogether for some of these patients.”

Jane Casey, Program Director Emergency Services & Command Centre
Humber River Hospital

“The partnership created as a result of our IDEAS project with Humber River has fostered a sustained focus on efficient, evidence-based quality improvement processes and improved patient experience.”

Angela Dowd, Service Manager Respiratory Continuing Care and
Respiratory Therapy, West Park Healthcare Centre

Achievements

- Designed their improvement approach in conjunction with patients, conducting focus groups to understand what quality care looked like to them
- During the implementation of the project, West Park and Humber River **reduced unplanned transfers between them by 21%**. Over the course of a year of sustaining this success, the **reduction in transfers grew to 30%**
- Overall, West Park was able to **reduce unplanned transfers to any ED by 13%**

The Solution: The West Park and Humber River IDEAS team set an aim of reducing unplanned inpatient transfers from West Park to Humber River by 10% by March 2018. After conducting focus groups with patients, they implemented a number of change ideas, including: Weekly Case Reviews to identify patients at high risk of repeat transfers so a plan of action could be initiated; implementing Alternative Care Pathways to expedite access to outpatient clinics and diagnostic procedures to help prevent deterioration and avoid repeat ED visits; and repatriation to home hospital, which helps ensure patients, especially those who were recent transfers to the West Park rehab program, were treated by the people who were most familiar with their care needs. Following an initial reduction in unplanned transfers to Humber River of 21%, the team was able to not just sustain the success but build on it—ultimately **reducing unplanned transfers to Humber River by 30%**. As well, **unplanned ED transfers from West Park to any hospital were reduced by 13%**.