

# #ResearchAtHorizon: Finding ways to detect and diagnose dementia sooner

Detecting and diagnosing Alzheimer's and other dementias as early as possible means those living with dementia and their families can benefit from the most up-to-date treatment and management strategies.

The options for treatment of this disease and strategies to help prevent progression are always changing and being on the forefront of the best possible care for dementia is important for everyone.

The Comprehensive Assessment of Neurodegeneration and Dementia study (COMPASS-ND) is the largest-ever Canadian study on dementia. The study is sponsored through an \$8.4 million federal research grant through the Canadian Consortium for Neurodegeneration and Aging (CCNA).

Through the COMPASS-ND research study, investigators hope to learn more about who is at risk of developing dementia, how clinicians can detect it sooner, and which tests will help them do this.

With more than 30 sites across Canada planned for recruitment, Horizon is home to one of the two only sites east of Québec.

Like most geriatric medicine research here at Horizon, the study is being managed by the

Health & Aging program at Horizon's St. Joseph's Hospital in uptown Saint John. There, Dr. Pamela Jarrett, a geriatrician, along with her geriatrician colleagues are working with the research coordinators Linda Yetman, RN PhD and Louise Grant, RN BScN, to recruit individuals who are experiencing a range of memory or thinking impairments, from mild cognitive impairment to various types of dementia, to participate in the study.

"It is a privilege to be part of this national research study here in Saint John and very fortunate to be at the leading edge of this work," said Dr. Jarrett. "We are most appreciative of the time and commitment that many people have given to make this research possible. Their commitment to this research will help guide the future for others with memory problems so that we, as health care providers, can continue to improve how we provide care every day."



Louise Grant (left) reviews one of the neuropsychological tests used in the COMPASS-ND study, with Linda Yetman.

Leaving no stone unturned as to a potential tool for detecting early changes, COMPASS-ND asks participants to take part in a comprehensive program of data capture: neuropsychological tests, brain imaging, blood tests, and biological samples for genetic analysis, to name a few.

Participants return at a later time to repeat the measurements, with the hopes that any and all changes in an individual's thinking, memory, social activity, and physical health, can be identified.

## What about the loved ones who provide care?

While it is important to improve our ability to detect dementia earlier than we currently can, it is equally important to help those who are now becoming caregivers for their loved ones.

Dr. Linda Yetman is interviewing caregivers of individuals with dementia from the COMPASS-ND study to better understand the experiences of caregivers so that we can help find or develop meaningful supports and help to alleviate the stress, uncertainty and challenges experienced by caregivers.

Linda found a number of themes in her conversations with caregivers, including the impact of feeling stigmatized by a diagnosis of dementia, coping with the loss and grief they anticipate is coming, coping with feelings of obligation and resentment, and the challenges of trying to maintain a normal life and maintain the personhood of the individual with dementia. Findings from the study will be presented at upcoming conferences.

With a senior population growing faster than the rest of Canadian provinces, New Brunswick is fortunate to be home to nationally recognized, leading expertise in aging and healthcare for our seniors.

To learn more about the work of the Health & Aging Research Program, visit our website.

**The COMPASS-ND study is continuing to look for participants at Horizon's St. Joseph's Hospital.**

**To learn more, contact Louise Grant at 506-632-5777.**

## Waste Walk reduces wait times at Horizon's Fredericton Public Health office

As part of the Waste Walk Challenge, Shauna Leaman, Registered Nurse at Horizon's Fredericton Public Health office, found a way to reduce wait times for patients by improving the process for rebooking immunizations.

Patients are booked into a 30-minute time slot that includes a mandatory 15-minute wait before leaving the office after their immunization.

The previous immunization booking process involved the nurse walking the patient out and waiting in line with them after their immunization to book their next appointment with the administrative assistant.

The step of the nurse waiting in line has been eliminated. The patient is now given an appointment slip to bring to the administrative assistant to book their next appointment on their own during their 15-minute wait. Eliminating this step allows clients to receive their full appointment time to discuss questions and concerns. It also allows nurses to have more time to prepare for their next client which ensures they are being seen on time.

"The new process is so simple, but much more efficient," said Shauna. "Clients, especially those with young children, now

feel less rushed leaving the office after their immunization knowing they can book their next appointment on their own time. The nurse has more time to prepare for the next patient, reducing wait times. It's a win-win!"



Shauna Leaman, Registered Nurse, photographed in her office at Fredericton Public Health.

**The new immunization booking process saves a total of 105 hours of wait time annually.**