



## **Quinte Health Care is on its way to becoming a more Senior Friendly Hospital**

*Article submitted by Terry Holland, Practice Coordinator and Kim Binder, RN, NICHE Coordinator*



Quinte Health Care is committed to becoming a Senior Friendly Hospital (SFH) and has adopted the provincial Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy, which is a systematic approach that promotes evidence-based practices in geriatric (elder) care in acute hospital settings.

QHC's SFH Steering Committee continues their journey to creating and supporting a senior friendly hospital environment here at QHC. Several initiatives are underway.

The environmental team has been initiated and will conduct surveys of our current space, such as patient rooms and public areas to help make us more "senior friendly". The survey will take into consideration shiny flooring, which sometimes creates a mirror effect for people with sight limitations; location of hand rails, which can promote or limit ambulation; and such things as door knobs, which are often difficult to turn for someone with arthritic hands.

Another team has been convened, tasked with looking at processes and protocols which influence care to our senior patient population. This interprofessional team will review various assessment tools and processes that are currently in place at QHC and they will look for opportunities to integrate best practice and evidence-based guidelines for care of the elderly. Our current focus tends to be based on the patient's acute (most urgent) medical condition and is not focused specifically on seniors. Reviewing processes of care will involve looking at assessment and diagnosis with special emphasis on age related changes, and avoiding hazards of hospitalization such as functional decline and delirium.

QHC is fortunate to have been given the opportunity to participate in the NICHE program (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders). This is a clinical education program that is relevant for all health care providers and is designed to help hospitals improve the care of older adults. Some QHC staff have completed the NICHE Leadership Training Program and we now have an assigned NICHE Coordinator, Kim Binder. We are awaiting official designation as a NICHE hospital when we will be able to access a multitude of resources and supports.

Health needs of seniors are different and require a different approach to care. Seniors are more vulnerable to adverse events and complications as a result of a hospital stay and an acute hospitalization can be a critical and pivotal event in a senior's life. Responding to the needs of an aging population is a significant challenge facing our health care system and one we take very seriously at Quinte Health Care. Our vision is to create a philosophy of care for our older patients, working with the patient and their family and the entire interprofessional team to provide a holistic care journey, helping the patient maintain their function and independence and facilitating a safe transition home. Stay tuned for more details as we work towards making Quinte Health Care the best Senior Friendly Hospital ever!