



Wired for patient care innovation



Left to right: Brittany Mills, Sarah Arbeau, Puneet Khanna, Amberley Dickey, Amy Cheverie, Tammy Wharram, Tammy Coward

A public-private partnership linking networks between **Loblaw Companies Limited-Loblaw/DrugStore Pharmacy** and the South Huron Hospital Association (SHHA) is a cutting-edge example of what teamwork can produce. It has also earned them this year's Commitment to Care Award for Corporate Health Initiative.

A small, rural hospital in Exeter, Ont., SHHA is void of any internal pharmacy services. This environment resulted in a prescription system that relied heavily on human factors, which presented safety and efficiency concerns. Nurses handwritten medication administration records. They also ordered drugs, which came in patient-specific, 28-day supplies and were kept on portable carts that didn't lock.

With the vision of improving its medication processes, SHHA formed a partnership with Loblaw. The company would provide all medications and clinical pharmacy services and the two parties would collaborate on linking networks. The technology project, which rolled out this past summer, resulted in an innova-

tive, automated program that seamlessly transfers information between the hospital and pharmacy.

In the new system, as patients are admitted into the hospital, their information is populated into the pharmacy computer software. Loblaw pharmacists then review medication orders and clinical lab data to ensure the medications that physicians prescribe are appropriate. "Loblaw's pharmacists have imbedded themselves in the circle of care," says Lisa Campbell, SHHA's operations manager and privacy operator who led the project alongside Loblaw's Puneet Khanna.

The hospital has also been able to cut down on drug wastage. Instead of pharmacists dispensing a month's worth of medication for individual patients each time an order is placed, they provide the hospital with individual dose packages ahead of time. When a pharmacist processes an order, a computerized medication cabinet at SHHA—locked with fingerprint and passcode security—automatically releases the medication for the patient. "This is very progressive," notes one awards judge.

The venture was a complex team initiative. Project managers Campbell and Khanna worked with pharmacists, technicians, nurses, physicians and IT professionals. They also conducted weekly conference calls to coordinate numerous vendors across North America to establish timelines and goals.

The pharmacy was divided into two operations: retail and hospital. It was also renovated to include rolling shelving units and an automated drug packager, which staff were trained on using. At the hospital, the automated medication cabinet was set up and nurses were taught the new distribution process. On the backend, IT networked and interfaced the two sites to enable data to flow seamlessly.

For Campbell, the improvements have made the long hours spent on the collaboration well worth it. "This partnership has been the missing component in allowing SHHA to complete their multidisciplinary approach to safe patient care."

— Brett Ruffell