

September 20, 2010 was a day of celebration for the Sunrise Health Region public and their healthcare providers when Saskatchewan's Ministers of Health and Finance toured the new state-of-the-art stroke rehabilitation facility. Stroke survivors provided demonstrations of the positive outcomes of their therapy to date and family caregivers spoke of the considerable advantages of accessing therapy close to home and family support.

In response to a proposal from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Health provided \$1.6 million for a two year stroke pilot focused on stroke prevention and rehabilitation. These areas were consistently identified by the public and health region administrators across rural and northern Saskatchewan as areas of significant need. The new resources for stroke prevention and rehabilitation will complement other components of a fully integrated stroke strategy already in play in the Sunrise Health Region

Funding from the Ministry of Health supported the creation of several new full-time positions for the Sunrise stroke rehabilitation program including stroke services manager, physiotherapist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist and social worker. Sunrise Health Region also dedicated a full-time nursing position as Clinical Coordinator for the rehabilitation program.

In addition to financial support from the Ministry, the East Central Hospital Foundation raised \$800,000. for the purchase of extra equipment to complement the rehabilitation resources in the Sunrise facility. The Foundation also supported Stroke Congress attendance in June 2010 by the regional Stroke Services Manager and the Director of Therapies.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan participates on the Sunrise Integrated Stroke Strategy Steering Committee and provides oversight of the pilot evaluation which has also been funded by the Ministry of Health. It is anticipated the evaluation will demonstrate that stroke patients achieve better outcomes when their rehabilitation therapies are delivered much earlier and much closer to home where they have the support of family and friends on a regular basis. Indeed, evidence already indicates that some stroke survivors in Sunrise Health Region have completed their rehabilitation in Sunrise before they would even have been admitted to a tertiary rehabilitation facility.

Implementation of the Stroke Prevention Clinic will be the next focus of the Sunrise pilot. Following completion of the pilot an evaluation of both components will be presented to the Minister of Health with recommendations for province-wide implementation of an integrated stroke strategy in Saskatchewan.