

Home Care in Canada: Part 1

By: Colleen Murray

In their *10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care* the First Ministers agreed that: Home care is an essential part of modern, integrated and patient-centred health care. Improving access to home and community care services will improve the quality of life for many Canadians by allowing them to be cared for or recover at home. www.news.gc.ca. In order to determine if improvements are being made we need to know what the current home care picture looks like.

This is the first in a series of articles, which will develop a sketch, of what services are currently provided by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. First off, lets deal with the federal level. The federal government has responsibilities related to home care for two groups of people - the First Nations and Inuit (Health Canada) and Veterans (Veterans Affairs Canada).

Health Canada provides funding to First Nations and Inuit communities to assist these communities in planning for and establishing culturally sensitive home care services that meet essential service needs and/or augment available community and/or provincial/territorial services.

Veterans Affairs Canada administers the Veterans Independence Program (VIP), which assists clients to remain healthy and independent in their own homes or communities.

VIP is not intended to replace other federal, provincial/territorial or municipal programs. It is combined with these and other available services to best meet the needs of each client. The services Veterans receive depend on their particular circumstances and health needs.

www.vac-acc.gc.ca

Under the Veterans Independence Program a client would receive assistance towards the costs of such services as: grounds maintenance (mowing and shovelling); housekeeping (laundry, cleaning, vacuuming and meal preparation); personal care services (bathing, dressing, eating); nutrition services like meals-on-wheels; and, health and support services provided by health professionals. The program also provides some assistance for transportation costs for activities such as shopping, banking, and social activities when no other transportation is available. Travel costs to health services such as adult day care are also supported. When needed, nursing home care will be funded for clients who need a greater level of nursing care than can be provided in the home. Finally, the Veterans Independence Program provides funding for home adaptations such as modifying bathrooms, doorways, and kitchens for such as wheel chair accessibility; and installing hand and grab rails as required.

What services are available to you and me through provincial and territorial government programs? What could and should be added to the basket of services currently available? Contribute to our National sketch of home care by relating your experience to capaeditor@arthritis.ca. And then stay tuned for the second instalment of CAPA's series on home care in Canada.