



Sixty years of exemplary dignified and loving care

by *Lindsey Patten*

The defining characteristic of the accreditation process comes down to one word: education. No one knows this more than the staff at Marianhill. Accreditation Canada announced recently that Marianhill was awarded Accreditation with Exemplary Standing, which is the highest level in the accreditation process and one that not many organizations have reached.

Marianhill, a facility in Pembroke, Ontario founded by the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 1954, offers 205 residents long-term care, complex-continuing care and a dementia respite unit. It also features a private retirement unit for members of the Catholic clergy operated by Marianhill and owned by the Grey Sisters.

Marianhill also has community support services throughout Renfrew County that serves an additional 160 people.

So how did Marianhill achieve this extremely high accreditation rating?

“Accreditation is an ongoing process some something that we are continually working on.” says Linda Tracey, Chief Executive Officer.

The last time Marianhill was accredited was in 2009 and at

the time it was accredited with a condition which meant that there were areas they had to improve upon.

The accreditation process includes a site visit. Marianhill had three surveyors come on site and do staff interviews, sit in on committee meetings and meet with community partners.

The result was that there were ten areas to examine and improve; the majority around medication management.

Marianhill ended up moving to a pharmacy provider that specialized in long-term care and provided them with an electronic medication administration record (eMAR). This allowed them to streamline the administration process of medication, making it easier to distribute correct medication and maintain clear and concise patient records.

For Marianhill, eMAR was a big change but one that they fully committed to. They installed wireless throughout the building and provided those caregivers in charge of medication management with laptops to better serve their patients.

They monitored the types of meds that were given, ensured that the diagnosis was there and available to caregivers, and reviewed medication. As Linda says, “The real issue was around quality improvement... and the comprehensive program was a key part... of the process.”

Another aspect that was focused on was their staffing program, which had several issues that needed to be addressed.



One of the things they did, Linda says, is participate in the Residents First Initiative which was provided by Health Quality Ontario. It offered education and training to improve their staffing to better suit the residents' needs.

"In that program, one of the things identified throughout Ontario as an area of improvement, was consistency of assignment." Linda notes.

"Residents want to know who is looking after them and want them to be familiar with their needs."

This meant streamlining the staffing program. It was a big step to change to a consistency of assignment scheduling. Linda notes that the staff was a bit resistant to the changes at first but that they worked alongside the union to get the desired results.

"The unions were very supportive in the way we approached it." Linda states. They even ended up adding a few full-time positions as a result of this new program.

The changes were this; an employee was primarily assigned to the same unit on the same wing for the time of the schedule. As well, everyone is assigned to a primary home unit.

"It was a real change to the way work was done at Marianhill so there were a lot of staff who had a lot of concerns and were worried about the impact this would have on their lives."

To ensure these changes were implemented smoothly, Marianhill took some extra steps including having open meetings and discussion with the staff. They also posted what the new rotations looked like ahead of time so staff had time to examine them and were able to choose the units they wanted to work in, based on seniority.

Linda says that, "by the time it came to implementing these changes, a lot of the anxiety was alleviated by that point."

Marianhill also is a community support services provider which impacted their accreditation score. They made sure that Accreditation Canada took note of their many community programs, including the McCluskey Centre; a 10 bed dementia respite unit which gives caregivers a break from the daily routine of caregiving.

Linda noted that it may seem counter-intuitive, but Marianhill staff are working to also keep patients out of their facility.

"One of the phrases you often hear in healthcare in Ontario today, 'is the right care in the right place at the right time.'"

That's why they offer an adult day program as well as their M.A.T.C.H. (Marianhill Action Team for Caregiving in the Home) program, which are both highly successful. The M.A.T.C.H. program provides in-home respite for caregivers. Staff goes into a home for 3 hours a week, giving caregivers a chance to run errands or take a break.

Linda states that in order to have a good care facility, "the



first thing we have to do is recognize staff as our best asset."

Communication with staff is extremely important to achieve change. Meetings have to take place in a timely order and changes have to be communicated in a timely way to staff. There is also an open door philosophy at Marianhill that allows issues to be addressed right away.

They take pride in the support of their staff through education workshops ensuring that staff gets the training and education they need.

"That's one thing I'm really proud of. The value we put on education," states Linda.

There are so many challenges on the horizon when it comes to long-term care and Linda states that the best thing is to be very transparent when changes are happening that are going to impact the staff and residents of Marianhill.

There is a good relationship with the family council and the residents' council as well as the Renfrew County long-term care administrators' network, which is an informal support network that deals with changes coming to the sector.

Marianhill also relies on associations like OANHSS for support and has a strong association with Algonquin, the local college. They are a partner in providing education, and when Marianhill won the large business of the year award last year, the close relationship with the college was acknowledged.

When discussing prevalent issues that are arising in long-term care, Linda noted that recruitment and retention are always issues that



need to be addressed as well as the increasing acuity of the residents.

She also noted that there is a changing population in regards to long-term care. Many care facilities are starting to admit younger disabled persons because it is the only option available to this group. Facilities need to be able to adapt to this change. These younger disabled residents have entirely different care needs than senior residents.

Marianhill has certainly adapted to the many challenges they faced with the accreditation process. Linda notes that it's important to have a good accreditation co-ordinator to keep everyone on track. Your co-ordinator can be a member of the staff who has incorporated these duties into their job. Linda remarks that good, open communication with Accreditation Canada is also

important. Marianhill took advantage of their courses and will continue to do so in the future.

It's not just about the final number, mentions Linda, but the processes behind it which are always ongoing.

"Accreditation is to show our commitment to quality and safety," Linda states.

Marianhill has certainly demonstrated that.

Accreditation Canada is a not-for-profit, independent organization accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) that provide national and international health care organizations with an external peer review process to assess and improve the services they provide to their patients and clients based on standards of excellence.

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