



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NHH expert in mindfulness-based chronic pain management uses telemedicine to bring patients relief from chronic pain

Registration now open for patient, health provider course beginning this fall

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Monday, July 28th, 2014—For some, particularly those with autoimmune disorders, pain is a constant presence. Standard medical interventions—medication, surgery—fail to bring relief and they live with pain, at some level, day in and day out.

Dr. Jackie Gardner-Nix has built an entire medical practice around her desire to help such patients. Now, thanks to the expanding Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) program at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), she is bringing that practice to this community.

Trained in England, Gardner-Nix worked with patients in London (Ontario), Scarborough and Toronto before, most recently, establishing a practice in Northumberland. Northumberland and, specifically, the OTN connection in NHH's community mental health services at 1011 Elgin Street West, Cobourg, now serve as Gardner-Nix's part-time base for her innovative work exploring the pain relief that "mindfulness" and formal meditation practice can bring.

"Health care is changing," says Gardner-Nix, "taking into account the essential mind/body connection."

Her own evolution from prescribing traditional pain medications to alternative therapies using mindfulness practice grew from her work with cancer patients—first as a Terry Fox Research Fellow in Cancer in London, Ontario and, later, through home-based palliative care and pain clinics, including Sunnybrook, Mount Sinai and St. Michael's hospitals in Toronto.

"Translating the drugs from palliative to non-cancer pain showed us that drugs didn't work as well in all circumstances. Opiates built too high in the blood stream can, in fact, turn off our internal pain-relieving mechanisms. Among the many skills taught, what we're doing in mindfulness work through our Mindfulness-Based Chronic Pain Management Program is showing patients their triggers for pain. Once they know their triggers, they can learn how to manage them."

"There is no typical patient," she concedes, "but generally I work with those who suffer chronic pain—pain lasting more than six months or beyond normal healing time. Patients who have found relief came to me with a range of chronic conditions, including arthritis, fibromyalgia, migraines, Crohn's disease, depression, pelvic pain, insomnia and lower back pain. Most of my patients suffer from pain that has not responded to the usual medical interventions. Many are women, but not all, and the average age is 45."

The program she is offering—a 13-week course for patients and a related 10-week course for health-care providers—aims to shift patients from a life of chronic pain and the "revolving door" of medical help to permanent, self-directed relief.

For patients, the cost of the classes—one half-day per week over the 13-week period—is covered by OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Program), with the exception of a \$120 fee for enrolment and course materials. Limited sets of the course material are available from NHH this fiscal year. Please inquire on registration as quantities are limited.

Background on Mindfulness-Based Chronic Pain Management (MBCPM)

As described by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., the “guru” of mindfulness-based stress reduction and, with several patients, the early inspiration for Dr. Gardner-Nix’s work, the MBCPM program is “a doorway into the universe of mindfulness, a particularly potent way of paying attention in your own life and of cultivating greater awareness, always starting from where you actually are and what you are actually experiencing.” Approaching pain with “attention, open-heartedness, and alert interest even for very brief moments,” Kabat-Zinn explains, can be “profoundly healing, restorative, and illuminating. And if practiced over days, weeks, and months, potentially it can make a difference in the quality of your life for years and years going forward.”

Beneficial to those suffering pain, depression or other health conditions, the course builds skills in pain control, self-care, sleep improvement, clarity of mind and personal motivation while introducing the possibility of a new community of support through others in the course.

Referral instructions

To participate, eligible patients are invited to submit a completed referral from their physician. Background information, including the patient information sheet, the patient/OTN referral form and further details for health professionals interested in learning more about mindfulness to help their own patients, are available online from Dr. Gardner-Nix’s practice, The NeuroNova Centre at www.neuronovacentre.com or by contacting Patti Ley, NHH’s OTN Coordinator, at pley@nhh.ca or (905) 372-6811 extension 3050.

Thanks to the support of the OTN technology (video-conferencing that connects large groups via TV monitors without the need for travel), the program is offered to patients in many communities in Ontario. The advantage for Northumberland residents to Dr. Gardner-Nix’s next offering (beginning September 11th, 2014) is that they will on-site at Northumberland Hills Hospital with the facilitator/founder herself, Dr. Gardner-Nix.

“This is a very innovative offering for our hospital and our community,” said Helen Brenner, NHH’s Vice President of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive. “Through Dr. Gardner-Nix and OTN we are able to offer local chronic pain sufferers a new option for managing their pain and, hopefully, improving their quality of life.”

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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