



Why have a Community Health Assessment (CHA)? Part 2

Remember the saying, 'In this world nothing is certain but **death** and **taxes**'. Some people have suggested adding 'CHANGE' to that list. This powerful 6 letter word can generate mixed emotions in people, depending on their level of tolerance for the unfamiliar. For some, change can generate feelings of apprehension and even fright; for others, it can create excitement, as new situations arise and challenge the familiar.

For the Canadian Health care system that is in an active state of reform, change holds great promise. Created by legislation passed in 1961 by Tommy Douglas, the public Medicare system was designed to treat acute illness. However, today chronic illness abounds, utilizing many health care resources and contributing to ever increasing costs. To loosely quote Einstein, "You can't keep doing the same experiment and expecting different results." Our health leaders have recognized the wisdom in this statement, as they address how to improve care within limited budgets, without the health of Canadians suffering.

So what does all this have to do with the Community Health Assessment (CHA)?

The CHA, mandated by Manitoba Health, is but one part of health care reform in shifting towards an evidence-based model to improve resource allocation and health care efficiency. The CHA provides grassroots evidence about the overall health of the region. Just as each person, each family, and each community are different so is the complex set of factors that influences whether people are as healthy as they can be.

The CHA process helps to identify these factors and the unique strengths and needs of communities. Using this information, health planners/decision makers are better able to set priorities and allocate resources in health planning to ensure the right program/resources, for the right community, at the right time. Now, that is the definition of quality health care.

At the North Eastman Health Association the third CHA is well underway. It is our pleasure to share a small sample of the positive changes that have resulted from findings of previous CHAs:

- ◆ Cancer Care program established at Pinawa Hospital
- ◆ Increased Emergency Medical Services staff
- ◆ Increased access to audiology services and reduced wait times
- ◆ Enhanced suicide prevention initiatives
- ◆ Nurse Practitioner services in Black River and Hollow Water
- ◆ Established diabetes care teams in four communities
- ◆ Partnership with Hollow Water First Nation for Public Health nursing services
- ◆ Developed a diabetes education resources website in partnership with Manitoba Telehealth.

[To learn how the CHA process happens watch for the next article!](#)