



Matthew van den Berg and his mother Carole Moore at one of CTN's local sites

Community of caring

Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York

Matthew van den Berg is four years old and is a special needs child. He was born with multiple congenital anomalies, but even after four years of treatment by a number of doctors and therapists, he has still not been diagnosed with any particular condition. As if treating a child with disabilities isn't already difficult, this uncertainty adds a level of complexity to Matthew's life that only a very small number of children and families ever have to deal with.

Matthew's mother, Carole Moore, Vice-president at a hospital in Markham, Ontario, knows the healthcare system in the area very well and says this helps her organize and deal with Matthew's treatments. But about two years ago, something came into their lives that would help the family even more: the Children's Treatment Network (CTN) of Simcoe York's "single plan of care" treatment model.

Information and communications technology is at the heart of this new model, starting with a shared electronic record for children and youth with multiple special needs. The system links health, education, recreation, social and community resources to improve the lives of multiple special needs children and their families throughout Ontario's Simcoe County and York Region.

"During the early stages of Matthew's life, he had physiotherapy, OT [occupational therapy], feeding support, nursing, dietician appointments, medical appointments, the list goes on," Moore says. "It was a full-time job figuring out where he was supposed to go, why, and who was doing what."

Moore and her husband hired a nanny to help manage Matthew's treatments, but even then, the situation was overwhelming. "When I returned to work after my maternity leave, I found myself feeling really frustrated after a visit with one of our therapists," Moore remembers. "It was nothing she had done, she had just added another three goals to our list. We now had 36 different goals, similar yet independent, involving the care of nine different therapists. It was way beyond what we could manage."

Moore approached the therapist to voice her concern. Her timing was impeccable.

CTN was about to launch a pilot program, and the therapist said Matthew would make a perfect pilot patient. "From there," says Moore, "we started into the single plan of care pilot project, where everybody came together, and a coordinator organized the meetings. We had about 10 to 12 people from different organizations

there to assess the goals my husband and I wanted Matthew to achieve. The single plan of care, and shared electronic record, put everyone on the same page. We began to meet regularly, and it allowed people to see what everyone else was doing."

Throughout Simcoe and York, referrals to services now occur more quickly, and even if children are still waiting for services, they are now waiting for the appropriate ones. Most importantly, the quality of care provided for the children and their families is increased through improved coordination. To date, more than 4,000 children have a shared electronic record. Five hundred of these have been transitioned to the new model and have experienced development of an integrated plan. The number of processed referrals has multiplied 65 times since the project launch, and the number of completed child/family interviews has increased by 60 per cent. Meanwhile, 900 care professionals have been trained on the single plan of care approach.

"Matthew has always been a happy little dude, thank goodness, and through his treatments with the CTN he has made dramatic improvements," Moore says. "At our last single plan of care meeting, we realized he had hit every goal we had set for him. He can now walk independently, and can communicate with anyone, and I'm not sure we would have gotten there if we hadn't all been focusing on the same objectives. It's a complex situation with him—he does not fit into a single category. You can't just say he's a child with Down Syndrome or another diagnosis. He's entirely unique, and he needs his very own plan. He is the only Matthew." ■

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