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Nurses, Family Doctors, EMS join to Strengthen Emergency Response Skills

Local nurses, family physicians and Bruce County paramedics from Wiarton and Lion's Head/Tobermory are coming together for a two-day rural emergency medicine program called The CARE Course (Comprehensive Approaches To Rural Emergencies). This is the first time this course is being offered in Ontario.

The training is designed for small rural hospitals where local people with medical emergencies are cared for by generalists (family physicians), nurses and paramedics. It originated in British Columbia and offers healthcare providers working in isolated areas opportunities to hone their emergency response skills in simulated emergency situations.

"Local rural family physicians who work in the ER together with nurses and EMS constitute a vital team in our smaller communities and we rarely get time to learn together on-site, taught by other rural generalists - rural clinicians who understand our realities," said Dr. Elaine Blau, a family doctor and representative of the rural physicians on the Grey Bruce Health Services Board of Directors. "We are very excited to have The CARE Course come to the Bruce Peninsula to offer us that very experience."

The BC team of rural educators will bring a tractor trailer full of high-tech equipment to Wiarton and Lion's Head in March for a two-day course in each community to focus on emergencies including trauma care, emergency obstetrics and airway management. The equipment includes mannequins that can be hooked up to heart monitors and programmed to mimic cardiac arrests and other emergencies. Between the two communities the training will be available to 48 participants, made up equally of nurses, doctors and paramedics.

"Communication and inter-professional teamwork skills are at the centre of the learning and teaching experience and are an essential part of providing excellent emergency care in low human resource settings," said Dr. Jel Coward, who, along with Dr. Rebecca Lindley, and their BC nursing and paramedic colleagues will teach the courses.

The CARE Course is being piloted in Ontario as part of a rural medicine initiative of the Ontario College of Family Physicians' Collaborative Mentoring Networks, and is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. For more information about The CARE Course in Ontario or the rural initiative please go to www.ocfp.on.ca/mentoring.

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