

(W35) DEVELOPING A MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS NURSING OUTREACH CLINIC

**Background:** The Fraser Health Authority is the largest and fastest growing health region in British Columbia (BC), serving a population base of 1.46 million in an area of approximately 10,000 square kilometres (6200 square miles). Currently there are seven neurologists addressing the needs of all neurological problems in this vast territory.

The Fraser Health Multiple Sclerosis Clinic was established August 2004 to serve the 3000 persons living with multiple sclerosis (MS) in this region. Currently we have over 1000 patients registered in our clinic. The large geographical area, coupled with the limited specialized resources creates physical, financial and/or geographical accessibility barriers for persons living in this region.

The nursing role in the Fraser Health MS Clinic includes symptom management, patient and family education, Disease Modifying Therapy monitoring, acute relapse assessment/screen and community liaising. These functions are often performed independent of the neurologist. The MS certified nurses can play a larger role in the provision of care to MS patients in the community to alleviate the effects of limited accessibility to specialized resources.

**Goal:** To perform a patient needs assessment and develop an MS nursing outreach clinic model based on identified needs.

**Method:** A patient needs assessment survey was mailed out to MS patients who attend our clinic. A comparison between the needs of patients living within a 10 kilometre radius of the Fraser Health MS Clinic and the needs of patients living outside the 10 kilometre radius was used to identify the need for nursing service, location, nursing-specific services required, and feasibility of community based service involvement.

**Results:** Results of the needs assessment will be utilized to create the model for an MS nursing-based outreach clinic.

**Conclusion:** Needs assessment and proposal for an MS nursing outreach clinic will identify and guide nursing service delivery to patients living in the outlying regions of the Fraser Health Authority.

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