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PROVINCE IMPROVES PATIENT CARE THROUGH FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Open Family Presence Policy Underscores Patient Focus

Saskatchewan is making strides in patient- and family-centred care, as the first Canadian province to take a provincial approach to an open family presence policy. Health regions are now moving towards more flexible visiting hours in hospitals, which will welcome families 24 hours a day, seven days a week, according to the patient's preference.

The approach recognizes that families are important partners in patient care, and are not simply visitors. The patient will define who comprises their family, such as relatives or other people they are close to.

"This is a great example of improving the patient experience, and we support it 100 per cent," Health Minister Dustin Duncan said. "Loved ones play an essential role in improving patients' health, and help further our goal of providing high-quality health services to all Saskatchewan residents."

Open family presence is an internationally recognized best practice that can benefit patients in specific ways including increased coordination of care, fewer medication errors, fewer falls, fewer readmissions, and an overall better patient and family experience.

"If I had been allowed to be at my Mom's bedside on my own terms I would not have felt as much anxiety," patient and family advisor Serese Selanders said. "The time left with my mom was measured in days. Every hour that we were prevented from seeing her was time we will never get back. Open family presence will change health care by helping everyone recognize that the 'team' includes families and loved ones."

All health regions adopted this policy on March 31st and are at various stages of implementation. The experience of patients and families with open family presence might vary during this time.

For more information, visit the Health Quality Council www.betterhealthcare.ca.

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For more information, contact:
Tyler McMurchy
Communications Branch
Saskatchewan Health
Regina
Phone: (306) 787-4083