

Natural Bowel Care

A Case Study from the Espanola Nursing Home

Constipation is a significant issue in the long term care setting. It negatively affects the quality of life of many of the residents and it involves a higher degree of nursing intervention.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Staff at the Espanola Nursing Home, located in northern Ontario, decided to do something about reversing the negative impact of constipation on the quality of life of the residents living there. They knew that almost half — 47 percent — of the residents had issues with constipation, having had a study done in the spring of 2006. The study also confirmed that the affected residents relied on chemical stimulants and invasive nursing treatments in order to have a bowel movement.

"For too many years we accepted the fact that the elderly will need to be dependent on laxatives and medications, and that invasive procedures are often the only reasonable method of treatment."

– Catherine Gray, Director of Care

Espanola's approach

Guided by the principle that clients come first and that they desire a higher quality of service and care, a leadership team consisting of the Director of Care, the Food Service Nutrition Manager and the Clinical Manager Infection Control/Staff Education decided to develop quality, client-focused, best practice regarding constipation issues. This was in early 2006.

The thrust of this multidisciplinary natural bowel management program was the use of ground flax flour.

by Jody Pilon *Jody Pilon is the Food Service Nutrition Manager at the Espanola General Hospital and Nursing Home. She has over 17 years of experience working in a food service health care setting. Readers can contact Jody by email at jdpilon@esphosp.on.ca.*

Flax is a naturally occurring fibre obtained from the seed of the flax plant. A natural laxative, flax reduces the need for pharmaceutical interventions such as laxatives, suppositories and enemas. Flax seeds have a nutty flavour and contain high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids.

Adding flax to the raw food budget would mean an extra monthly cost of about \$60, but staff members were keen on introducing a program that would enhance the residents' quality of life. The end result has been a significant reduction in the use of government-issued pharmaceuticals.



Using information contained in a resource binder purchased from Valley Flax Flour Ltd in Middleton, Nova Scotia, the team put together a plan for using flax. The program included three main components: the adjustment of the majority of in-house recipes, the development of the nursing care pathway, and education sessions for staff and residents. The natural bowl program includes significant amendment to favourite recipes, with an ultimate goal of adding a minimum of 2 teaspoons of ground flax to everyone's diet. All standing orders from physicians for the use of pharmaceuticals would be discontinued to coincide with the planned implementation date. Residents who require additional support would receive an additional 2 to 4 tablespoons of ground flax with meals throughout the day. The additional flax is determined based on a nursing care pathway.

The plan was presented to the residents during a Residents' Council meeting, which helped to secure the program's success. With a resounding endorsement from

the residents, the program was then presented to the Medical Advisory Committee for a final go-ahead.

The program was unrolled to care staff at a number of education sessions. Several resources from Valley Flax Flour were used to educate staff on the benefits of introducing flax into residents' diets, including pamphlets and a video.

The new menu

The spring 2006 menu served as the first introduction of the ground flax program. Soups, stews, casseroles, meatloaf, breading for fish and chicken dishes, and baked goods were all "boosted" with ground flax. Staff taste-tested the recipes as the ground flax was added to ensure that palatability and presentation were not compromised. It was hoped to add between two and four teaspoons of ground flax to each person's daily consumption.

EGH Famous Pasta Sauce

Recipe Yields 50 Portions of 1/2 C

11 lbs lean ground beef
6 lbs Arrezzo tomato sauce
12 lbs diced tomatoes
1 qt water
1 qt ketchup
3-1/4 C chopped onion
1 T crumbled bay leaf
1 T ground thyme
1 T garlic powder
1/4 C worcestershire sauce
1 T ground oregano
1 T celery salt
1-1/2 C ground flax

Brown beef and pour off excess fat. Add all ingredients to browned beef. Simmer uncovered, stirring frequently until thickened — approximately two hours.



Once the meal plans had been worked out, the next step was to get all departments onboard during the introduction of other new strategies in the fall of 2006:

- discontinuing physician orders for routine bowel care medications and replacing these with additional flax flour based on identified needs following the nursing care path; and
- developing a protocol for medical intervention, which involved having frontline staff identify which residents on a given day would require pharmaceutical support in addition to the extra flax at mealtime and communicating that information to the registered nursing staff.

Conclusion

After six months, the results of the natural bowel movement program were in! Nursing interventions had decreased by 71.5 percent — far exceeding the team's expectations. This meant that many residents were no longer having to endure

invasive treatments or consume oral pharmaceuticals in order to support their daily bowel routines. Some residents also had increased control over their own bowel care. And, residents are pleased that they do not have to take as many medications every day as they used to.

After six months, nursing interventions had decreased by 71.5 percent, many residents were no longer having to endure invasive treatments or consume oral pharmaceuticals in order to support their daily bowel routines, and some residents also had increased control over their own bowel care.

One year later only three of the 62 residents continue to regularly rely on pharmaceutical and nursing interventions in order to have bowl movements. Based on doctor's orders for pharmaceuticals to aid in bowel movements recorded June 2006, it was determined that in one

month there would have been at least 1480 interactions between the RPN and the residents. If each interaction is estimated to take 60 seconds, this represents 24 hours a month. In an already hectic day, a few minutes saved without compromising resident care and safety is much welcomed.

Staff are not only pleased with the results but that they have been able to offer the residents at Espanola Nursing Home a non-invasive method for their bowel routines. LTC

FYI

- Valley Flax Flour: 1-866-825-8256; info@flaxnet.org; www.flaxflour.com.



**PICK UP
JUNE/07
PG. 7**
LIKE HAVING HELP FOR YOUR BUSINESS
WHERE DO YOU WANT YOUR BUSINESS TO GO?

Visit Booth 1314 at the OLTC/ORCA Convention
for a chance to speak to one of our LTC Audit,
Tax, and Advisory specialists.

We'll help guide you there.

 **Horwath Orenstein**

Horwath International Association is a Swiss Verein. Each member of the association is licensed to include "Horwath" in its legal name but remains a separate and independent legal entity.

Wascomat

High Productivity and Low Operating Cost



**PICK UP
JUNE/07
PG. 14**

EXSM665 Washer
Choice of Clarus or Selecta20 Control
Frequency Controlled Motor
300-G Force

TD75 Dryer
Save up to 30% in Gas and Energy
Easy to Install, Maintain and Service



**Sales Installation
Service Parts**

Ontario
Laundry Systems Inc.

7475 Kimbel Street, Unit #, Mississauga, ON
905-673-1308 1-888-669-4837 Fax: 905-677-7163
www.ontariolaundry.com info@ontariolaundry.com