

Centre boosts city's healthcare

Community Health Centre ready to welcome clients

By Corey Lewis

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Most healthcare facilities call them patients.

But at the Vaughan Community Health Centre, they're clients.

The CHC celebrated its official grand opening last week. The facility offers catered, holistic care to priority populations: youth, seniors and those with mental illnesses.

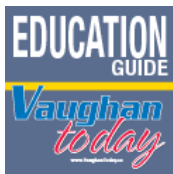


DOORS OPEN: Local politicians, members of the Vaughan Health Care Foundation and community members joined in the celebration at the opening of the Vaughan Community Health Centre last week. The facility offers catered, holistic care to priority populations. (Corey Lewis/Vaughan Today)

The centre differs slightly from OHIP's traditional fee-for-service model you'll see at other healthcare facilities. Instead, it features a capitation model.

In other words, physicians are paid for the clients on their registry, whether they come in for care or not.

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The hope is that this will force doctors into the frame of mind of looking at the bigger picture, examining ways to maintain health as opposed to only helping clients when they are ill.

“The facility is not physician-driven,” said CHC executive director Isabella Araya. “It’s driven by health promotion and illness prevention. We’re a different kind of health centre.”

The CHC's interdisciplinary staff consists not only of doctors, nurses and dietitians, but also social workers who will assess how an individual's social environment — including income, housing and level of isolation — contribute to their ailments.

The CHC is not a walk-in clinic: registrations will be required. The centre has dispatched three outreach workers into the community to connect with those most in need of help and invite them to register.

On-site are computer labs to teach seniors and those with mental illnesses basic computer skills, and a youth room. There's also a kitchen area where seniors can learn how to cook healthy meals for themselves.

To better service its target populations, the centre has also teamed up with the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Vitanova Foundation, which donated 15 pieces of art.

“We need to be accountable to our clients and we need to be accountable to the

public in general,” said Vitanova founder and executive director Franca Carella. “We will be saving the taxpayer by working together.

“None of us can be all things to all people. But together, we can offer a better service.”

The client list was expected to be around 100 at this point, Araya said. But since opening its doors to clients in February, they’ve signed up 500.

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