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Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health Goderich, Ontario

A Community-Driven Centre for Rural Health Research

BRIEF

“Health research is essential for providing people with quality health care and improving their health. Health research is key to ensuring a healthy and wealthy society. Health research not only extends life, it improves the quality of life. It is imperative to make research central both to our health agenda and to our economic agenda because the links between these two areas are clear.”

- *Dr. Alain Beaudet, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research*

Introduction:

In the summer of 2007, a group of fifteen community leaders and volunteers from the small town of Seaforth, Ontario, undertook a road trip to Hazard Kentucky, to visit a unique Centre of Excellence in Rural Health. In this small (population 5000) coal mining town in the Appalachian Hills, they found a group of dedicated health care providers and teachers operating a very unique and cutting-edge health care centre and teaching hospital. In a modern facility, a rural arm of the University of Kentucky was delivering and teaching health care and conducting research. The town of Hazard and surrounding area shares many health care issues with rural south west Ontario. With state and federal funding and in partnership with the University of Kentucky, the centre thrives as an example of state of the art health care delivery in a poorer, less developed, rural segment of American society and geography.

On their return to Canada, the group of fifteen, inspired by what they had seen and heard, formed a volunteer Board of Directors, named the entity and started Gateway. Gateway continues to expand its team of academic research partners. It has met with great success to date in research team development and professional, academic and economic associations. There are volumes of health and socioeconomic data showing that Canadians living in rural areas are health disadvantaged.

What is Gateway?

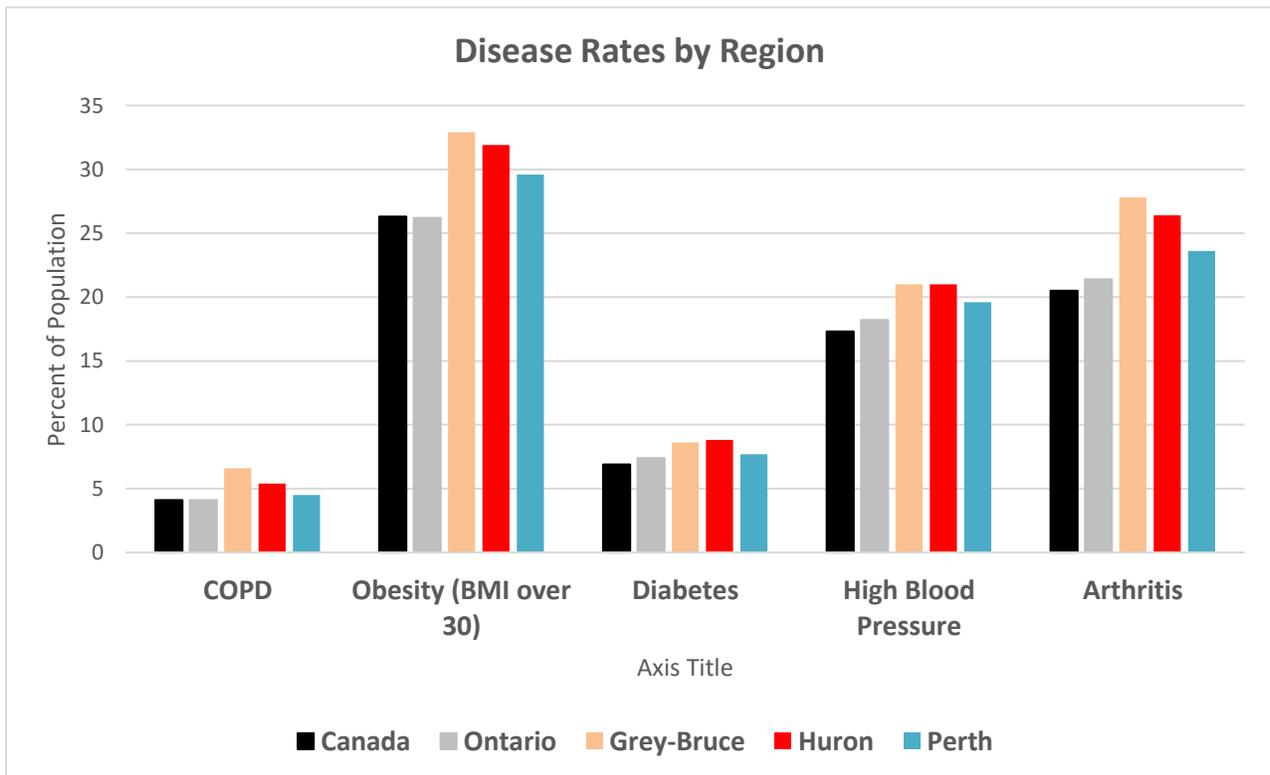
Gateway was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit corporation with charitable status governed by a community-based volunteer Board of Directors committed to its continued success. Gateway is, to our knowledge, Canada's only community-based rural health research institute.

Gateway’s mission is “to improve the health and quality of life of rural residents through research, education and communication.” Through health research we can improve health care and health care delivery. Through innovation in rural health research, education and health business, we can attract health care professionals to our area and be an economic driver for a health and knowledge based economy. We can be a model for similar development in all of rural Canada.

Gateway was established to ensure:

- **Healthier rural residents** actively contributing to **healthy local economies** and requiring less health care over time (reduced hospital admissions and emergency room visits)
- **World class research & teaching facilities** that attract a wide range of health care professionals to practice in this rural area
- **Creation of a rural model** for Canada that successfully links health research, education, evidence-based practice and economic development through innovation

Gateway Exists because of the Prevalent Rates of Chronic Conditions in Huron-Perth-Grey-Bruce Counties



Data is from 2016 Community Health Characteristics (CANSIM Table 105-0509)

	Percent of Population with...				
	COPD	Obesity (BMI over 30)	Diabetes	High Blood Pressure	Arthritis
Canada	4.1	26.3	6.9	17.3	20.5
Ontario	4.1	26.2	7.4	18.2	21.4
Grey-Bruce	6.6	32.9	8.6	21	27.8
Huron	5.4	31.9	8.8	21	26.4
Perth	4.5	29.6	7.7	19.6	23.6

Through consultation with family health teams and data collection from Gateway's rural target area - **Huron, Perth, Grey and Bruce Counties**; Gateway has shared mutual concerns with health professionals about the following:

- Higher than average rates of hypertension in the region
- Higher than average rates of suicide among farmers in the region
- Higher than average incidence of chronic diseases
- Higher rates of diabetes
- High rates of rare forms of cancer
- High incidence of heart attacks
- High rates of C.O.P.D.

As a research centre, Gateway's goal is to establish best practices in rural healthcare to address the significant risks facing our local communities.

Gateway Understands Rural Community Economic Challenges

Gateway is located in an area that has been hit hard economically with loss of manufacturing jobs and chronic unemployment. Innovation and education in rural health research does more than attract healthcare professionals. It recruits new practitioners from urban areas, helps to retain and attract residents, creating new knowledge-based and much-needed jobs. An important assistance since rural areas have lost thousands of permanent and historical manufacturing jobs.

Gateway's Achievements and Activities (2008-2017)

Memoranda of Understanding with Educational Collaborators:

- University of Guelph, Ontario Agriculture College, School of Environmental Design & Rural Development
- Western University, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
- University of Waterloo, School of Pharmacy
- The Canadian Centre of Rural Creativity
- Goderich to Guelph Rail Trail (G2G)
- Alexandra Marine & General Hospital, Goderich, ON
- South Bruce Grey Health Centre, Walkerton, ON

Research Chairs:

- Dr. Feng Chang – Chair of Rural Pharmacy
- Dr. Ken Milne – Chair of Rural Medicine
- Dr. Craig Hudson – Chair of Rural Mental Health
- Dr. Agnes Kluz – Chair of Rural Senior Wellness
- Dr. Wayne Caldwell – Chair of Rural Healthy Sustainable Communities
- Dr. Durhane Wong-Rieger – Chair of Rural Health Coaching
- Jay McFarlan- Chair of Rural Healthy Food & Exercise
- Diane Donaldson - Chair of Rural Functional Foods
- Dr. Paul Gill- Chair of Rural Pain Medicine
- Dr. Ross Avery Chair of Rural Health Promotion
- Dr. Ryan Gibson – Chair of Rural Economic Development
- Dr. Al Lauzon – Chair of Rural Change & Development
- Dr. Heather Mair – Chair of Rural Community Development & Well Being
- Rose-Marie Dolinar – Research Associate

Gateway Ensures Healthy Sustainable Communities:

- Helping to attract businesses and strengthen rural health care by bringing world class leaders to the region
- Putting our region on the map by establishing a centre of excellence in rural health with a focus on teaching and research.

Gateway has successfully grown from our initial vision with the support of many people who recognize the unaddressed needs of rural Ontario.

We are grateful for the support from our local communities and private donors. We thank the following contributors:

Bridges of Seaforth
Farm Credit Corporation
HealthKick Huron
Huron Business Development Corporation
Huron County
Huron Perth Poultry Producers
McCall MacBain Foundation
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Libro Credit Union
Dr. Neil MacDonald

Progressive Turf Equipment Inc.
Rural Ontario Institute
Seaforth Golf & Country Club
Seaforth/Huron East Community Development Trust
United Communities Credit Union
University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy
University of Guelph – Ontario Agricultural College
Western University
Trillium Mutual Insurance
MacEwan + Feagan Insurance

Donations have enabled Gateway to:

- Establish our administrative structure
- Employ local students and assist in advancing their healthcare careers
- Provide facilities and mentorship to allow traditionally urban research and teaching resources to reach out into rural Ontario.
- Support numerous rural research projects and publish the results
- Continue to raise awareness of rural health issues.
- Disseminate information through meetings, presentations and seminars to healthcare professionals, our government leaders and the general public.

Going forward we plan to...

- Expand our partnerships with academic centres and other collaborators
- Conduct much needed research on recognized and under recognized rural health issues
- Ensure knowledge is successfully transferred back to the communities we serve