

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this respiratory virus has created a heightened awareness of lung health. While much has changed in our lives over the last number of months, the Lung Association of Nova Scotia has been continuing to focus on the management of lung disease and ongoing prevention. We are collectively experiencing a necessary shift in how we deliver and receive healthcare, as we continue to work on keeping the curve flat.

When it comes to lung health and staying ahead of the curve, Nova Scotia has been a leader in remote healthcare delivery, as seen with the INSPIRED program for COPD patients. **INSPIRED** - “Implementing a **N**ovel and **S**upportive **P**rogram of **I**ndividualized care for patients and families living with **R**espiratory **D**isease” is a Nova Scotia Health Authority program that was established 10 years ago by leading healthcare professionals. Since its inception, this program has spread to benefit patients across Canada. In Nova Scotia alone, this unique method of healthcare delivery has benefitted over 1500 patients by helping them self-manage symptoms related to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), while also resulting in a 60% reduction in emergency room visits.

Why unique? Long before COVID arrived, INSPIRED staff recognized the value of providing individualized care to patients in their homes. For a variety of reasons, some people are unable to access care in a clinical setting. They may be too breathless to leave their home, live in a remote area, or may not have access to transportation. The INSPIRED team identified these patients as a population that could receive remote care using virtual technology. This technology has allowed the INSPIRED team to coordinate with clinicians to ensure issues related to symptom management can be addressed quickly and efficiently.

The INSPIRED program uses innovative approaches to give patients the tools, education and support to self-monitor and manage their COPD-related symptoms, thus avoiding unnecessary--and usually unwanted--trips to an acute care setting. This has become even more important during the pandemic, as COPD patients are at an increased risk for developing complications from COVID-19.

The INSPIRED team has been ahead of the curve, providing remote care to referred patients and their families. It has never been more necessary or welcome than now. Patients report feeling less afraid and isolated knowing the program continues to support them during this pandemic.

Unfortunately, the INSPIRED program is not available in all areas of our province where people are struggling with COPD. The Lung Association of Nova Scotia is committed to advocating to ensure programs like INSPIRED are made accessible to ALL Nova Scotians. Dependable outreach makes great programs like INSPIRED work.

Yours in Lung Health,
Robert MacDonald, President & CEO, Lung Association of Nova Scotia