

## Mission Moment

### Stirring Joy Together: Our Cake Mixing Tradition



In just its second year, our Cake Mixing Ceremony at St. Joseph's Heritage has already become a beloved holiday tradition. About 30 residents and tenants from Bethammi Nursing Home and PR Cook apartments worked side by side with staff and students, stirring flour, fruits, nuts, and spices to create a beautiful Christmas cake.

The ceremony was a joyful celebration of connection, teamwork, and the little moments that make the season special. According to one resident, "This brought back good memories of my childhood, preparing Christmas cakes with my parents."

The result? Festive cakes that will be enjoyed by clients and staff of Bethammi Nursing Home, PR Cook Apartments, Lodge on Dawson, and Mino Ginawenjigewin this holiday season!

- Submitted on behalf of St. Joseph's Heritage

## Drive High-Quality People-Centred Care

### Community-Based Stroke Rehabilitation: Expanding Access and Equity

In November 2024, St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) launched the Community-Based Stroke Rehabilitation (CBSR) Outreach Team to provide equitable, specialized post-stroke care closer to home. Comprised of a navigator and health professionals trained in stroke rehabilitation, the team delivers both in-home and virtual care to clients across Northwestern Ontario, including fly-in First Nations and drive-to communities east of Thunder Bay. This work supports health equity, truth and reconciliation, and timely recovery in regions where access to specialized stroke care has been historically inaccessible.

In its first year, CBSR surpassed projected targets, serving 111 unique clients with 218 visits that occurred within nine days of hospital discharge. The hybrid model provides 85% of therapy in person, meeting challenges posed by the region's vast geography and its low population density. Early outcomes demonstrate that 60% of clients would not have accessed essential care or equipment without the program. Client feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with one spouse noting: "The Outreach Team has been phenomenal in helping to navigate recovery, care, resources... I honestly don't know what we would have done without the support of the whole team."

Advocacy efforts successfully changed Ontario Health travel funding policies around eligibility, enabling more equitable access for clients in remote communities. However, travel costs exceed the available budget, requiring a shift in how the program is offered as the team continues to explore funding opportunities with Ontario Health.

## Nurture Our People

### Strengthening Compassionate Care Across Canada



St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) is proud to support Dr. Shane Sinclair as Canada's first Cross-Country Chair in Compassionate Care, a five-year initiative led by the University of Calgary. Funded jointly by St. Joseph's Health System (Hamilton), Covenant Health Canada, and SJCG, this initiative will advance research, education, and practical tools to strengthen compassion across healthcare organizations nationwide.

Compassion is fundamental to health for clients, their families, and the staff who provide care because it fosters connection and strengthens wellbeing. Evidence shows that when people feel understood, valued, and genuinely cared for, their experience of care is significantly improved, enhancing healing and trust.

Through this partnership, SJCG is helping to support research that will shape care experiences and deepen healing and connection across Canada. The initiative reflects SJCG's commitment to nurturing our people, including clients, families, and staff, by embedding compassion at the heart of healthcare. Insights gained from this work will guide how healthcare organizations continue to grow compassionate practices, creating stronger, more connected, and healing-focused experiences for all who access care.

## Lead and Enhance Regional Specialized Care

### Expanding Access and Impact: The Northwestern Ontario OSP Program

SJCG's Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) program continues to advance our strategic priority to *Lead & Enhance Regional Specialized Care* by providing timely, evidence-based mental health services across Northwestern Ontario. Serving people aged 18 and over who are experiencing depression, anxiety, and related conditions, OSP offers both virtual and in-person therapy. Regional engagement has increased referrals and access, with wait times among the shortest in the province. Notably, 8% of clients identify as Indigenous, many supported through Indigenous Service Delivery partner sites.



Over the past year, client enrollments grew 26%, particularly in communities such as Kenora, Dryden, Red Lake, and across the North Shore. Self-referrals via The Access Point Northwest account for nearly half of all referrals, reflecting the program's low-barrier approach. Eight regional partner organizations support timely access and collaborate to enhance quality, address system challenges, and strategize on improvements such as therapist retention.

OSP addresses critical system gaps by accepting self-referrals and offering stepped care to clients who do not have a primary care provider. Using a structured cognitive behavioural therapy model, the program achieves improvement and recovery rates above the provincial average. Its hub-and-spoke model, with virtual and telephone options for lower intensity treatment models via Bounceback\* and iCBT\*\*, ensures timely and more equitable access for rural and remote clients.

Looking ahead, OSP is expanding its reach in rural and remote communities, with a strong focus on relationship-building through engagement with Indigenous Peoples and communities. This includes advancing a culturally safe and culturally grounded care pathway. OSP is also strengthening outreach to ensure low-barrier access for people who are marginalized, including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, people living on low incomes, people with disabilities, and racialized communities.

*\*Bounceback is a free, Canadian Mental Health Association program using cognitive-behavioral therapy for adults and youth (15+) managing anxiety, low mood, stress, and depression, offering telephone coaching, online videos, workbooks, and skill-building to help manage symptoms, challenge unhelpful thoughts, and improve overall mental wellness.*

*\*\*Inference-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, known as iCBT, is a unique form of psychotherapy developed for individuals who suffer from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and related psychological conditions.*

## Strategic Enablers

### Ethics Breakfast 2025: Navigating AI in Healthcare

As AI becomes an increasingly prominent part of healthcare, preparing our staff for its adoption is essential. This year's Ethics Breakfast, *Healthcare Ethics in the Age of AI*, featured expert speaker Dr. Rosalind Abdool and focused on both understanding AI and reflecting on how it can be adopted responsibly.

Dr. Abdool highlighted how AI is transforming healthcare, from diagnostics to care planning, while exploring emerging ethical considerations such as privacy, equity, and accountability. The session invited participants to consider their roles in supporting the ethical implementation of AI, with an emphasis on collaboration, oversight, and a continued commitment to people-centred care.

Group discussions centred on ensuring AI systems enhance (and do not replace) the values that guide our work, fostering thoughtful dialogue on how to integrate technology while upholding trust, ethics, and client care. By combining knowledge-building with reflection, the Ethics Breakfast supported staff readiness for AI adoption and reinforced St. Joseph's Care Group's commitment to innovation grounded in ethical practice.