

Celebrating Success

Helping Frail Seniors Better Navigate the Health System *Intensive Geriatric Service Workers connect seniors and services together*

Doris Hoffer, 87, has lived a life on-the-go. Her and her husband Bob made the decision early on in their marriage not to have children and to travel the world instead. Together, they went anywhere and everywhere they wanted.

When Bob passed away, Doris was devastated, lonely, and her health was failing. She was on multiple medications and without Bob to remind her of which ones to take and when, she was confused and constantly ending up in the emergency department for help.

Without children to help with her care, and with her siblings in their eighties and nineties themselves, Doris was reluctant to admit she was struggling to live at home on her own. Six weeks ago, she was extremely confused and agitated. Her neighbour Sam took her to the emergency department where she met with a Geriatric Emergency Management Nurse.

The Nurse assessed Doris and created a care plan for her to access supports in the community. She also immediately referred her to an Intensive Geriatric Service Worker (IGSW), a new role coordinated by Trellis Mental Health and Developmental Services and funded through the Waterloo Wellington LHIN's Aging at Home program.

IGSW's provide support to frail seniors requiring access to community health services. They act as a navigator, setting up specialist appointments, and helping seniors to access existing programs such as meals on wheels and friendly visiting.

Together, Doris and her ISGW Heather Higgs went to see a geriatric specialist, visited her pharmacy to have her medications placed in easy-to-follow blister packs, went to the lab to have her blood work done, and explored a number of retirement homes. "I wish everyone could have the service I have," shared Doris. "I didn't want to admit I needed help. I didn't know where the services were. But Heather did. She knew everyone and she made all of the calls for me."

Since meeting Heather six weeks-ago, Doris's health has improved greatly. Her blood levels are better. She hasn't been to emerge. She has moved into a retirement home where her medications are given by a nurse and she eats three meals a day, something she hasn't done since Bob passed away. "She is healthier, happier, and safer, which is the ultimate goal for all of our clients," said Heather.