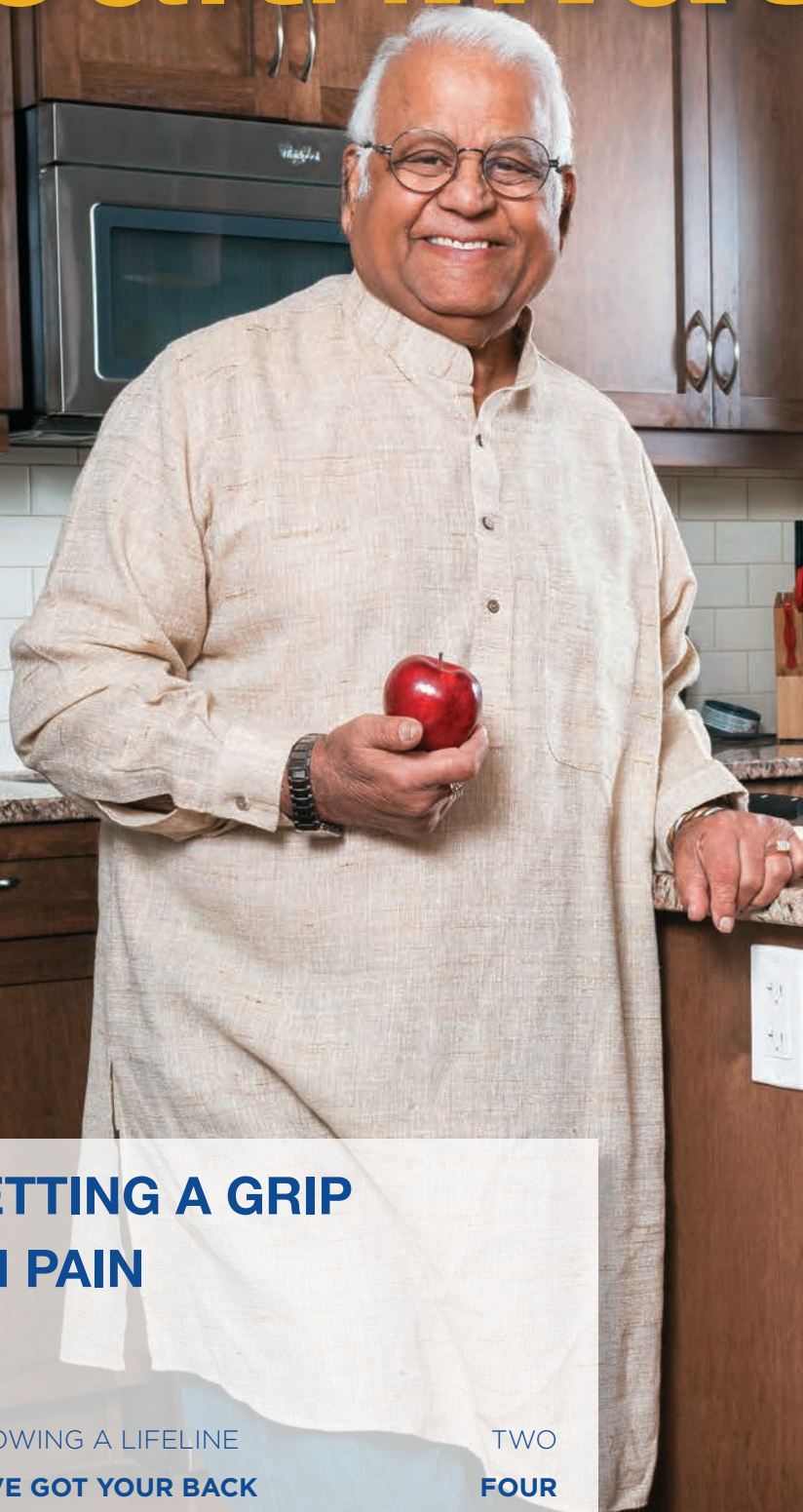


FALL 2017 ISSUE 9

HealthMatters

mypcn.ca



GETTING A GRIP ON PAIN

THROWING A LIFELINE

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

STILL IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

GETTING MORE OUT OF LIFE

TWO

FOUR

SIX

EIGHT

PrimaryCare
Networks
CALGARY AND AREA

► Your *Health Matters*

Health Matters is published by Calgary and area Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to give you information about the programs, services and health teams available to you through your family doctor. Primary Care Networks in the Calgary area were established about 10 years ago to provide people with health services and programs through their family doctors.

Today, PCNs work with teams of other health professionals, as well as offer programs such as Prescription to Get Active and Find-a-Doctor.

Health Matters, Fall 2017 Issue publication team:

Jennifer Allford, Keith Bradford, Terry Bullick, Bart Goemans, Jessica Hone, Cory Leyte, Dr. Christine Luelo, Janine Poersch, Amy Sawchenko, Chrissie Worth

Contributors:

Jennifer Allford, Trudi Lee Harder, Julie McLaughlin, Jimi Scherer, Colleen Biondi, Michael Interisano

We appreciate your feedback and article suggestions. Contact our editorial team at communications@mypcn.ca.

To find your PCN, visit mypcn.ca

- › Bow Valley Primary Care Network
- › Calgary West Central Primary Care Network
- › Calgary Foothills Primary Care Network
- › Highland Primary Care Network
- › Mosaic Primary Care Network
- › Calgary Rural Primary Care Network
- › South Calgary Primary Care Network

Extending a lifeline to seniors

Team at Geriatric Assessment
and Support Clinic perseveres
to find health solutions

WRITTEN BY COLLEEN BIONDI

PHOTO BY TRUDI LEE HARDER

Married for 43 years, Bill and Colleen Montgomery have different approaches to life. He has a quiet, cerebral nature; she has an engaging and spirited persona. They do, however, share a dogged determination to solve one of their biggest concerns—Bill's increasingly complicated and debilitating health issues.

A dedicated and multidisciplinary team of healthcare providers at the Geriatric Assessment and Support Clinic at the Calgary West Central Primary Care Network (PCN) recently joined the couple.

"It has been an amazing journey," says Colleen, of their experience with the clinic, which has existed since 2009 and sees about 240 new patients each year. "We have been very impressed."

Bill's health problems started 30 years ago when he had a cancerous tumour removed from his brain. Soon after, he experienced minor mobility issues, memory blips and mild depression, but he continued to work as a mechanical engineer in Calgary's oilpatch. Fast forward to June 2016: Bill was retired and his symptoms were much worse. Plus he had



Geriatric nurse consultant Wendy Fuchs (left) talks with Colleen and Bill Montgomery about his upcoming tests through the PCN geriatric assessment service.

lost weight and had a heart attack.

Bill and Colleen's primary care doctor ran several tests and recommended Bill go through a cardiac rehabilitation program and to the PCN's Geriatric Assessment and Support Clinic.

This past spring, Bill and Colleen met with a doctor, a pharmacist and a nurse consultant, all clinical specialists in caring for older adults. They reviewed Bill's history and gathered updated information. The team then referred Bill to a psychiatrist and a neurologist, who has ordered an MRI.

The clinic's team is still working with the Montgomerys to solve the

puzzle of Bill's health. His condition is so unusual that the team has named him "The Mystery Man."

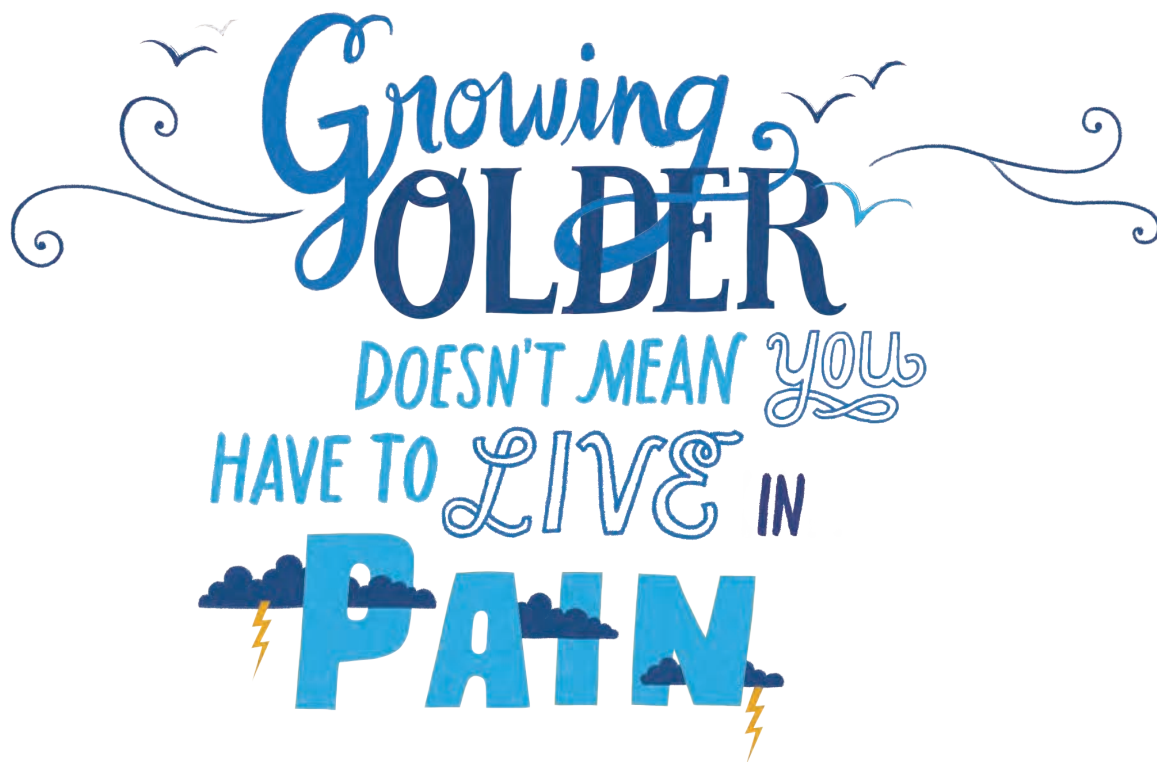
"But they will persevere, find a diagnosis and a solution," Colleen says. "You get the feeling they care about you. And they won't give up."

Meanwhile, Wendy Fuchs, a PCN geriatric nurse consultant on the team, referred Bill to Alberta Health Services' Community Accessible Rehabilitation to help him regain mobility. And she's referred Colleen to AHS's Family Caregiver Program to help her deal with the emotional demands of caring for her husband. Colleen is learning new ways to cope with Bill's memory loss, such as giving him just one simple task

at a time: "Sweep the floor." Too many instructions (sweep the floor in the kitchen, then in the bathroom, then empty the dustpan) tend to overwhelm Bill.

And the Montgomerys are able to call the geriatric assessment clinic any time with questions. It offers a full menu of assessments and support, says Fuchs. "We have the time to listen to patients and caregivers and understand what their concerns are."

The geriatric support service is a lifeline for which Bill and Colleen are very grateful. "The unknown is a terrible factor to have in your life. We feel a sense of hope at the clinic."



Growing OLDER

DOESN'T MEAN *you*

HAVE TO LIVE IN

PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY JULIE McLAUGHLIN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL
INTERISANO

Pain is part of life—from stubbing your toe and putting out your back to undergoing surgery. But as we age and our health becomes more complex, we're more likely to experience chronic pain. If you do, it helps to understand how you can manage it effectively.

One in three seniors in Alberta lives with chronic pain, which is pain that goes on long after someone expects to feel better and be healed.

"When pain lasts for a long time, the ability to cope with or manage it often breaks down," says Christelle Zacharki, primary care pharmacist and lead of the Pain Management Clinic at the Mosaic PCN. "We help people learn about and manage their pain using a holistic approach that involves the emotional, social and spiritual aspects of pain. We give people knowledge that may

keep them in control versus their pain being in control."

Liz Northam has arthritis throughout her body and was used to clenching with pain whenever she would move too much. "It's kind of a subconscious thing," she says. "But once you learn how the pain works, you can manage it. If you know you are going to get some kind of pain, you can deal with it."

Northam, 56, went to Mosaic PCN's Pain Management Clinic for a year and learned about a number of tools. They include simple stretches and exercises, skills to manage pain flare-ups and breathing and relaxation techniques to improve mood and sleep.

She also learned to challenge negative thinking about pain. "You talk to it, you envision it," Northam says. "There's one technique where you envision that you are in a stream and the pain keeps riding down, getting smaller and smaller,

and when you breathe out, the pain goes out with it."

Mosaic PCN's Pain Management Clinic team includes a physician, pharmacist, nurses, mental health therapists and a social worker, kinesiologist and physiotherapist. The team complements the care of its patients' primary care physicians.

"Managing chronic pain requires lifestyle changes and approaches to improve a person's quality of life," says Zacharki.

Working with the team has improved Northam's quality of life. "The beauty of the pain management clinic is everything is in one place," she says. "You get to know the staff and they all work together for you so that you can make your goals."

➤ **For more information, visit Mosaic PCN at mosaicpcn.ca**




Managing low back pain

A new Primary Care Network program is helping people with acute lower back pain feel better. Back 2 Health is six, two-hour classes that cover everything from physical exercises to strengthen your core to mental exercises to try to change your thoughts about pain.

"Often a lot of people who struggle with low back pain feel that it's out of their control. But we know there are things they can do," says Ashley Nickles, a registered nurse with the South Calgary PCN. "And it can make a huge difference."

Those things include looking at your posture and how your furniture is set up at work and at home. It's also helpful to understand the connection between pain and your brain. "There is a strong psychological component to pain," Nickles says. "If we have these negative thoughts and feel like we don't have control we know that pain does intensify. It makes things worse."

The program teaches some basic muscle and mind relaxation techniques, how to create a plan to manage your life when you're in pain and why it's important to keep moving. "One of the main points we want to get across is we want to still try to be active," Nickles says. "As hard as that is, we want to keep moving."

 To learn more, visit scpcn.ca.

Liz Northam learned a number of pain-management techniques at Mosaic PCN's pain clinic, one of which involves visualizing it floating down a river.

A photograph of a road sign on a road. The sign is white with a black border and black text. The text reads "ARE YOU SAFE BEHIND THE WHEEL?". The sign is mounted on a black pole. The background shows a road with a white line, trees, and a clear sky.

**ARE
YOU SAFE
BEHIND
THE
WHEEL?**

Every driver, regardless of age, needs to consider whether they have the skills to drive safely. Many things can influence performance behind the wheel, including illness and medical conditions that affect eyesight, hearing and more.

As we age, our hearing, vision and cognitive function can change. Age also affects our range of motion and ability to quickly react to hazards, vehicles and pedestrians on the road. If you're an older adult and want to renew your driver's licence, Alberta Transportation requires you to get a medical report signed by a doctor at age 75, age 80 and every two years after age 80.

Talk with your physician or Primary Care Network healthcare team about getting a complete evaluation of your medical and physical abilities for driving.

TIME TO HANG UP YOUR KEYS?

Alberta Transportation and the Canadian Automobile Association recommend it may be time to hang up your keys if you have any of these signs:

- You lose your way or are easily distracted
- You have less confidence when driving and get easily frustrated or upset
- You miss stop signs and traffic lights
- You fail to signal, or signal incorrectly
- You mix up the gas and the brake pedals
- You have problems changing or merging lanes on busy roads or highways, or turning or backing up
- You have minor collisions, including more than two in the last two years
- You are driving too fast or too slowly
- You are slower than you used to be to respond to dangerous driving situations
- You are on medications that could affect your driving ability
- You have your vision checked less often than once a year
- Your healthcare team, family or friends are concerned about you and your driving.

Primary Objective

PHOTO BY MICHAEL INTERISANO

Name and age: Ravi Khanna, 74

Health condition: I have diabetes and was overweight. My blood sugar levels were alarming.

Health goal: Live better and enjoy my family life.

How I feel now: My sugar levels are down, I've lost weight and my clothes fit better. I feel much healthier and I'm not tired all the time. I check my blood levels every day and watch what I eat. I stay away from sugary things such as desserts and sweet drinks. That was hard for two or three days, but then I felt better. I was scared about the needles for taking insulin, but it's a piece of cake. I am very grateful to my healthcare team.

Working together: I enjoyed working with Ravi and helping him understand diabetes and how to use insulin and test his blood. With proper control of his diabetes, he can keep doing the things he loves. Ravi took control of his health and made very significant improvements in managing his diabetes.

—Jackie Liu, pharmacist and Primary Health Care Team lead, Mosaic PCN