

Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

The Annex



The challenge

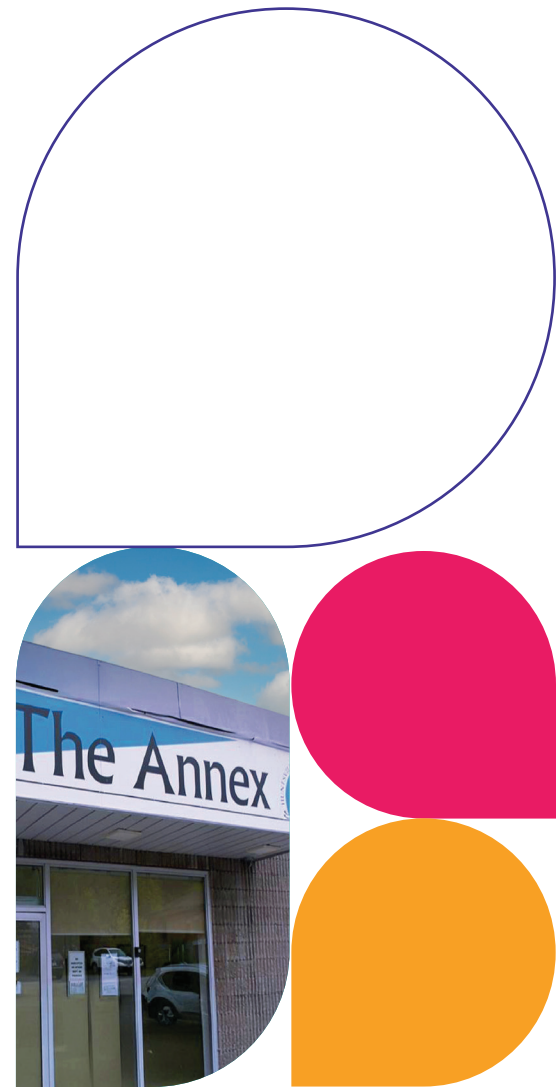
In Huntsville, Ontario, over 4,000 residents lack access to team-based primary care or a family doctor. This shortage leads to an increased reliance on emergency departments (EDs) as the primary access point for healthcare.

The promising practice

The Annex is a comprehensive, team-based, nurse practitioner-led primary care clinic – housed in the community library – for people who do not have their own care team or family doctor. This clinic provides the right care in the right place, ensures patients discharged from inpatient care receive routine, comprehensive follow-up to promote recovery and prevent readmission, and helps patients avoid having to seek care via ED.

Example impacts

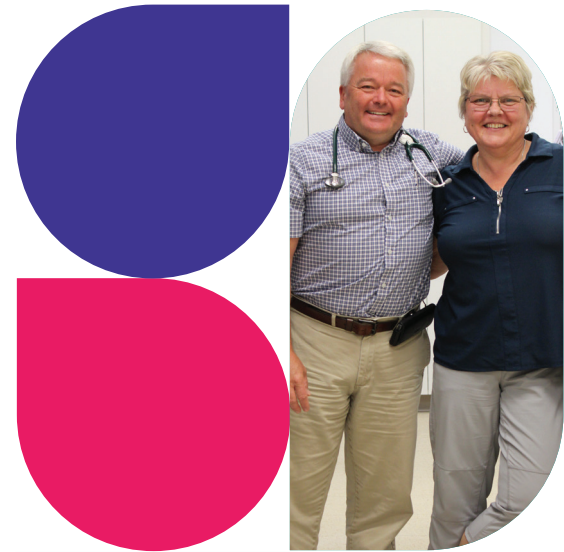
- Since 2023, The Annex has provided 4,853 comprehensive care visits for 1,682 unique patients, who would have otherwise had to seek care via ED or have not sought care. Between 20 and 45 patients access care at The Annex every day.
- 75 percent of patients report that being seen at The Annex helped them avoid an ED visit.
- Patients are reporting great experience of care at The Annex, as well as improved access to timely follow-up care and specialist services.
- Providers are reporting greater work satisfaction, increased ability to work at top of scope of practice to provide long-term, comprehensive care, and improved team collaboration.
- Providers report high levels of satisfaction with their employment at The Annex, noting that not having to pay overhead or sign long-term contracts allows for greater flexibility and an improved work-life balance.



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Keys to success

- **Funding:** from many partners including the community of Huntsville, Northern Ontario Academic Medicine Association, HEC, Muskoka Area Ontario Health Team.
- **Champions, including:**
 - A lead physician to recruit and engage community partners and primary care providers to mobilize services.
 - A project lead to establish and manage day-to-day operations, communicate progress, and grow the program over time.
- **Community and organization partners:** to ensure The Annex meets the needs of Huntsville residents, and providing financial and operational support.
- **Work flexibility and work-life balance:** incentives including part time hours and no overhead fees make it easier to recruit and retain doctors.
- **A team of allied health professionals:** including nurse practitioners, doctors to provide comprehensive team-based primary care.



Why was this summary created?

Algonquin Family Health Team in collaboration with NOSM University, participated in Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program. SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care.

This promising practice summary was co-produced with Algonquin Family Health Team and local primary care provider leads to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.

Lessons learned

- Take time to create and foster partnerships with people, communities, and organizations to finance, guide operations, and allow the clinic to grow. Without community partnerships, The Annex would not be possible.
- Collect and monitor data to inform ongoing improvement to ensure it best meets needs of communities.

How can I learn more?

Contact the project team.

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