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From Concept to Progress: Manitoba is on the right path!

Manitoba has made significant strides in embracing social prescribing, a transformative approach to healthcare that recognizes the importance of social and environmental factors in improving overall well-being. This concept involves healthcare providers, such as doctors and nurses, prescribing community based interventions—like social support, community activities, and lifestyle changes.

In Manitoba, our 5 health regions have begun the process of approving and uploading a Social Prescribing Seniors Referral form into local electronic medical record systems. Primary healthcare providers are meeting with patients and observe that their patient may need support from the community. The healthcare provider completes the referral and then sends it on to the local senior resource coordinator (SRC). The SRC will meet directly with the referred person to determine needs and identify supports that can help people to live their best lives.

Over the past few years, Manitoba has increasingly integrated social prescribing into its healthcare system, responding to a growing recognition for the need to promote health by addressing the broad range of factors that impact health and well-being. The province has seen various initiatives and pilot programs emerge, encouraging individuals to connect with

community resources that promote healthier lifestyles, such as art classes, exercise programs, volunteer opportunities, and social clubs. These initiatives are designed to empower individuals to take control of their own health through social and emotional support, which can be just as impactful as traditional medical treatments.

The introduction of social prescribing in Manitoba aligns with broader national and global trends of promoting holistic care and preventive measures. Through collaboration between healthcare professionals, community organizations, and local governments, Manitoba has continued the development of integrated and patient-centered approaches that address the complex and interconnected nature of health.

This progress reflects our collective commitment to create more inclusive and accessible systems for wellness, where people are encouraged to seek solutions within their communities, ultimately fostering better long-term outcomes. The success of these programs in Manitoba could serve as a model for other regions, showcasing the benefits of addressing the broader determinants of health in creating a healthier population.

Across the Miles - How Social Prescribing Helps!

Benefits of Social Prescribing for loved ones living out of town - a granddaughter's story...

Living away from aging loved ones is never easy. The distance often means we go long stretches without visits or the ability to offer hands-on support. As a granddaughter living in a different town from my grandma, I often find myself feeling the weight of this separation, knowing I can't always be there to provide for her. My grandma is a very sociable person, talking to everybody and anybody no matter where she goes. In her daily life she enjoyed playing in a bowling league, participating in fitness classes at the senior centre, being a member of the Red Hat Ladies, and volunteering her time for different events in the community. Her social life meant everything to her. When mobility became difficult, her sense of self started to be affected and it took a toll on her mental health. After some time in the hospital, it was evident she wouldn't be able to drive anymore or walk far enough to get herself to her weekly activities. She assumed her life would be changed forever, and, feeling embarrassed and a bit guilty for not being able to keep up, started to distance herself from her friends. This was a tough transition for my whole family, and we knew we needed to help my grandma find different ways to maintain her social life.

Through the work of Social Prescribing and resources provided by the Senior Resource Coordinator in her community, we learned that people's health improves when they have access to resources and support within their communities. To really take care of someone, it's important to focus not just on their physical health, but also on things like loneliness, financial struggles, housing issues, food insecurity, and even the need for creativity, movement, and social connections. These factors all play a big role in overall well-being, and Social Prescribing is a way to meet those needs. Our first priority was to look into transportation services so she could still make it to her medical appointments out of town. When her friends weren't available to drive her, the local Volunteer Transportation Service was an option for a reasonable fee. With my grandma's immediate medical needs addressed, we moved on to restoring her social life.

While she isn't able to bowl or attend as many Red Hat Ladies events anymore, my grandma's social life hasn't dwindled. By finding different ways for my grandma to continue to see her friends, including carpooling or hosting, she's back to her usual social butterfly self. With more time at home, she's started reading again, and her local library tracks her books, putting together a new stack each month. It was hard for my grandma to accept her friend's help at first, but once she realized she would do the same for them, her perspective shifted. Social Prescribing ensures that adults in every community have a support network and an opportunity to continue doing what they love as they age. As a granddaughter living in a different town than my grandma, it's reassuring to know her community network provides ongoing support in ways I'm not able to. Last week, she even told me she couldn't talk on the phone when I called because she was busy playing cribbage and drinking coffee with her friends. I've never been so happy to be hung up on!

Connect with a Senior Resource Coordinator in your region or talk to your doctor to learn more about Social Prescribing.

-Abby Swanton



Research has shown that Social Prescribing has had a positive impact on both the lives of older adults and seniors who are connected to community resources,¹ as well as within the Healthcare System.^{2,3} For older adults and seniors this has been proved through an increase in social connections, an increased sense of well-being, improved mental health, and increased sense of purpose, independence, and confidence. For the Healthcare System, Social Prescribing has led to a 14% decrease in unplanned hospital admissions, a 20% decrease in emergency room visits, and a 21% decrease in the cost of unplanned hospital admissions.

1 Bild, E., & Pachana, N. (2022). Social prescribing: A narrative review of how community engagement can improve wellbeing in later life. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 32(6), 1148-1215.

2 Abel, J. et al. (2018). Reducing emergency hospital admissions: A population health complex intervention of an enhanced model of primary care and compassionate communities. *British Journal of General Practice*, 68(676), e803-e810.

3 Dayson, C., & Bashir, N. (2014). The social and economic impact of the Rotherham Social Prescribing Pilot: Main evaluation report.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING



How Does it Work?

Referral: Health care providers identify patients who could benefit from social prescribing.

Assessment: A resource coordinator meets with the individual to understand their needs and interests.

Connection: The resource coordinator connects the individual to community resources like:

- Support groups
- Art and music therapy
- Physical activity programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Educational workshops

Get Involved

For Individuals: Talk to your healthcare provider about social prescribing options.

For Providers: Learn how to refer patients and connect them with local resources through a Senior Resource Coordinator.

Enhanced Social Connection & Your Health



MENTAL

Reduced stress
Better cognitive function



PHYSICAL

Better immune function
Lower risk of chronic illness



EMOTIONAL

Increased happiness
Stronger sense of belonging



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To learn more about implementing social prescribing:

- In Manitoba contact [Manitoba Association of Senior Communities](http://manitobaseniorcommunities.ca)
- [Social Prescribing Manitoba](http://SocialPrescribingManitoba.ca)
- [Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing](http://CanadianInstituteforSocialPrescribing.ca)