

Wellness for Seniors—SCREEN Tool Success

In 2008, seven partner agencies from the SouthWest LHIN in Huron and Perth Counties were awarded Aging at Home funding to develop a “Wellness for Seniors” program focusing on education, fitness and nutrition.

As part of this initiative, the SCREEN nutritional risk assessment tool developed by Dr. Heather Keller from the University of Guelph, became an integral part of the program and was a service offered to clients.

In July 2010, Mitchell and Area Community Outreach initiated the SCREEN tool by interviewing 44 clients of which 15 were deemed at nutritional risk of some degree (contributing risk factors included, but were not limited to, eating alone, not eating enough from a certain food group, difficulty getting groceries, difficulty with meal preparation). These clients were given information about different aspects of eating habits, healthy living resources, the Canada Food Guide, were connected with resources if they had trouble chewing or swallowing, connected with services to help them with meal preparation, meal delivery or opportunities to dine with others, all to assist the client in improving their nutritional levels.

In November and December of 2010, the 15 identified clients were contacted again and the SCREEN tool used the second time to determine if the recommendations and information provided by staff to the clients improved their nutritional status. The results showed that 66.7% of the clients improved their level of risk since the initial follow-up to the rescreening. (note: 1 client was hospitalized during the second attempt of contact)

The results show that by using the SCREEN assessment tool, providing education, information, access to programs and services and supporting the client, that the level of nutritional risk can be improved; thereby, improving overall client health, reducing ER visits or hospital admissions and delaying or avoiding long term care admission. This tool ultimately has a direct impact in supporting the LHIN priority of reducing ER visits due to its positive impact on the healthcare system by providing a means to improve client health and it is a low cost, accessible program offered through Community Support Agencies helping to keep people in their home.