



Practising At The NorWest Community Health Centre: An Interview with family physicians Dr. Raymond Balec and Dr. Ella Goodman

NorWest Community Health Centres have three sites (Thunder Bay, Longlac and Armstrong), and provide rural outreach services in the District of Thunder Bay through a Mobile Health Services unit.

Why did you choose to practice in a CHC?

RB: I like the multi-disciplinary aspect of Community Health Centres. I like having nurses to help with preventative care, community health workers to help with social issues, dietitians and counsellors. All of these health care providers working together improve the quality of health care a patient receives.

What is the most rewarding experience about working in a community health centre? What are the challenges?

EG: The majority of the clients are extremely complex medically or have significant social factors that have led to addictions, poverty, and social isolation. The most rewarding experience is seeing a client who initially has a fear of the health-care system develop a desire to improve his or her quality of life. This can occur after developing a good rapport with the client over several appointments.

What does your typical day look like?

RB: My day starts at the clinic at 8:30 a.m. and I usually leave between 4 and 5 p.m. Most of this time is spent seeing clients. The rest is spent doing paperwork, reviewing test results, and consulting with nurse practitioners.

What advice do you have for medical residents who are thinking about a CHC practice?

RB: Try it! It would be a good idea to do a rotation at a CHC. Forget about billing, forget about going to the hospital in the wee hours of the morning (or anytime for that matter), and forget about being paged in the middle of the night. It's awesome.

EG: Working in a CHC means being an employee with a salary, pension, benefits etc. A resident should consider which funding model best suits his or her needs.