



## 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.



## The Benefits of Practising in a Community Health Centre – An Interview with Dr. Jessica Lee

*Dr. Jessica Lee completed her family medicine residency training in Montreal and the Enhanced Skills Program in Global Health & Vulnerable Populations at the University of Toronto. An HFO MRA Regional Advisor helped connect Dr. Lee with the practice opportunity at Parkdale CHC.*

### What were the factors that influenced your decision to practice at Parkdale Community Health Centre in Toronto?

I wanted to work with vulnerable populations. The position with Parkdale CHC met all of my clinical interests. The vast majority of patients at Parkdale have experienced trauma at some point in their lives. In addition, they often have multiple social factors that negatively impact their health. It is more challenging to improve their health, but also much more rewarding when these patients recover from their illnesses.

### Why did you specifically choose to practice in a CHC?

The salary payment model offered in the CHC setting provides security and predictability with my income. I don't feel the pressure of having to see more patients in a day and I feel I can provide better patient care. The benefits package is also a bonus.

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

The most rewarding aspect is working with the patient population. Second to that is working in an interdisciplinary team environment. Everyone contributes to some aspect of our patients' care. The camaraderie and team spirit at Parkdale is one of the best I've witnessed.

Provider burnout and compassion fatigue are real challenges, especially when working with vulnerable patient populations, but it is possible to work in this setting long-term.

### What characteristics do you think a physician needs to work in a community health centre?

You must be able to provide empathetic and culturally sensitive care within a team setting. We work with people from many different backgrounds and it is crucial to be respectful and non-judgmental.

You also need to be able to coordinate with external agencies in a collaborative manner and have an understanding of how they contribute to the patient's health.

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

- Consider arranging an elective at a CHC or a locum position when you become licensed.
- Research the community and patient population so you have an understanding of the needs and pressure points in their lives.



## Sioux Lookout – Where Passion Meets Opportunity

For more information on practice opportunities in Sioux Lookout, please contact local physician recruiter **Jamie Sitar** at [Jamie.Sitar@slfnha.com](mailto:Jamie.Sitar@slfnha.com) or **807-737-6117**.

### Are you a new primary care physician looking for an exciting practice opportunity?

The Sioux Lookout region is actively seeking passionate and dedicated family doctors (including GP specialists such as anesthesia, obstetrics, and addictions).

At the beautiful 60-bed Meno Ya Win Health Centre, you would have the opportunity to experience a full-scope practice. Imagine a variety of practice scenarios: Seeing patients at the clinic, doing a shift at the emergency department, or even flying to a remote First Nations community to deliver care.

You'd also receive great support as you transition into practice. Through the local **mentorship program**, you would be paired with a local physician who would provide guidance and answer questions. "The collegiality and support that you will receive working here is beyond measure," says Dr. Celia Sprague, a local family physician.

At the end of a busy day, you could go paddling, fishing or just enjoy the beautiful lakes, knowing that you have made a positive impact on the community.

### Sioux Lookout Snapshot

- **Location:**  
Northwestern Ontario (45-minute flight to Thunder Bay or Winnipeg)
- **Population:**  
Approximately 5,500
- **Catchment Area:**  
32,000 (main hub for 31 remote First Nations communities)
- **New Opportunities:**  
Recent funding by the government has created new physician opportunities; a new family health team will be created.
- **Scope of practice:**  
ED coverage, hospitalist, community phone coverage, community clinics, and clinical work.
- **Hospital:**  
Two OR suites, three general surgeons, OT/PT, mental health, dialysis, and CT scanner support.