

The Cape Breton Newcomers Clinic.... why can't my brother be a patient?

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In 2022, the director of Primary Care (Michelle De Podesta) and Manager of Primary Care (Jennifer Kendrick) identified a need for a health home for people who are new to Canada. They immediately turned to the CBU Nancy Dingwall Health and Counselling Centre for assistance as we have a direct link to many of the newcomers to Canada on Cape Breton Island and a strong history of caring for people from other nationalities.

In the design of the new co-lead clinic we addressed some of the barriers to primary health care faced by newcomers and what we can do as an organization to minimize or delete these barriers. We met, process mapped and envisioned a clinic where people from outside of Canada can get access to care regardless of their immigration status or insurance coverage.

The department of Health and Wellness came on board and we were able to get public funding for the physicians to be paid an hourly rate due to the complexities of caring for someone who does not have any medical records in the country or in the English language.

Our first client was a recent CBU Grad and his pregnant wife and toddler daughter. The fact that the Dad worked for our clinic as a student during COVID arranging testing and supporting students in isolation makes it more of a welcoming environment for his family. Now he is working in construction on the new CBRH and his wife is an RN on maternity leave and they just had their 2nd daughter. They bought a house and a car and have opened their house to a single mom who just arrived in Cape Breton to study at CBU and her 12-year-old son, and he continues to pay it forward in the community by volunteering and helping anyone who needs help. This is just one of many stories of the almost 1000 people enrolled in the Cape Breton Newcomers clinic. During our talk/discussion we will talk about where we were, where we are and where we are going with this great collaborative endeavor.