To determine the viability of specialized geriatric units, RHAs may wish to evaluate the evidence for costs/benefits of creating such units and assess how the units would function within the hospital context.

Allocating space within designated hospitals for the intake, assessment, and triage of older patients could potentially fill a key gap in the province’s acute-care infrastructure.

One significant impediment to age-friendly acute care in Newfoundland and Labrador is the lack of a service provider workforce educated in principles of geriatric care. In addressing this issue, decision makers would be well-advised to find training methods that fit into employees’ tight schedules. Educational initiatives that draw staff away from their units for extended periods of time would be particularly problematic for the smaller, more remote sites of service.

RHAs may wish to establish formal standards/protocols for hospital care for older adults. Implementing such protocols may improve front-line providers’ knowledge about the principles of geriatric care.

Advanced practice nurses trained in gerontology may help RHAs implement protocols for improving geriatric care in hospitals and enable a more responsive approach to older patients’ unique needs.

Older patients would benefit from initiatives that encourage patient-care teams to communicate across professional boundaries and work more effectively toward shared goals.

Acute-care facilities in all regions may wish to consider delegating assessment of older patients to specially-trained personnel equipped with a validated geriatric assessment tool.

The provincial shortage of allied health personnel compromises discharge planning processes and undermines interprofessional collaboration. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists are particularly critical to successful transitions from hospital to home.

Gaps in post-acute services can strand older patients in acute-care units where intensive rehabilitation and other forms of step-down care may not be readily available.

Read the full report here: www.nlcahr.mun.ca/chrsp