

# Spreading success in elder care

## Innovative tool keeps elderly patients out of hospital

In Ontario, more than 75,000 people 65 years of age and over live in long term care (LTC) facilities and a high proportion of them visit emergency departments (ED) for additional care. However, once LTC residents are transferred to an ED they are at risk for hospital acquired complications such as delirium, pressure ulcers and falls.

Marilyn El Bestawi, a senior healthcare executive with experience in geriatrics knew that keeping LTC residents out of EDs could combat preventable deterioration in health status. Through participation in the EXTRA program, she developed a novel tool called PREVIEW-ED® to help staff predict the types of declines in health status that require the elderly to visit EDs. By arming LTC staff with the tool, El Bestawi provided them with a means of identifying early signs and symptoms of decline – and preventing ED visits through timely intervention.

## Why it matters

Keeping the elderly out of hospital is an important strategy for preserving their health. More than that, by preventing ED visits, healthcare systems can save significant financial resources.

## Impact

Results were impressive. Over the project's initial three months, the pilot facility reported a 57 percent decrease in transfers to the ED associated with pneumonia, urinary tract infections, dehydration and congestive heart failure for the residents who participated in the project. It is estimated that if the tool were implemented throughout the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network, savings would amount to \$500,000. Scaled provincially, the potential savings would be roughly \$6.25 million annually.

"We need to improve the quality of care for the elderly – not just to save money through fewer emergency department visits, but also to improve their quality of life."

– Marilyn El Bestawi,  
EXTRA project lead

Marilyn El Bestawi, EXTRA 2013  
fellow and Personal Care Worker  
Lillian Carrera with resident  
Pasqualina Tenuta.





## Better care for seniors

### Novel tool prevents ED admissions.

Plans are underway to expand the use of Marilyn El Bestawi's groundbreaking PREVIEW-ED® tool throughout the Lakeside long term care facility, the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute's long term care centre, which is part of the University Health Network. El Bestawi has presented her findings at several Canadian conferences. PREVIEW-ED can be applied to other LTC facilities and populations, and be used in other jurisdictions nationally and internationally.