



# News Release

## Sarnia-Lambton Showcased at Global Healthcare Conference

*Patients and families benefit from integrated suite of tools in mental health and addictions care*

SARNIA - February 5, 2020 - **Paula Reaume-Zimmer**, Integrated Vice President of Bluewater Health's Mental Health & Addiction Services and the Canadian Mental Health Association Lambton Kent (CMHA Lambton Kent), has been invited to Belgium on February 5 to present at a global healthcare conference called World interRAI 2020.

Reaume-Zimmer is speaking at the international conference about CMHA and Bluewater Health's experience in using the interRAI standardized suite of mental health and addiction assessment tools, in partnership with Dr. Hirdes, Dr. Perlman and their team at the University of Waterloo.

Mental Health and Addictions is an area of healthcare that is growing very quickly, yet traditional medicine is often unable to use their standard process to address these unique clinical needs. Around the world, medical teams are unsure of how to best manage this growing area of concern.

"This integrated initiative is a unique approach that showcases true systems planning, bringing sectors together from youth and adult, hospital to community and addiction and mental health under a unified assessment suite of tools," says Reaume-Zimmer. "Using common approaches, protocols and tools (like interRAI) respects the patient's dignity and privacy, and eliminates the need for them to retell their story over again, at each transition of care."

During the conference, Reaume-Zimmer will be highlighting a "real world" example of the interRAI tool at work in Sarnia Lambton. "Last fall together with our partners at the Sarnia Police Services and the Lambton County detachment of the OPP we announced a new MHEART (Mental Health Engagement Response Team) mobile response unit," says Reaume-Zimmer. "The MHEART program is for those who have mental health and addiction needs and come into contact with police services. The mobile rapid response teams are made up of mental health workers and police who work together to help those in crisis, de-escalate the situation, and connect people with needed services."

In the first three months of operation, MHEART teams responded to 256 mental health related calls and determined that only 16 individuals required an Emergency Department visit. With the interRAI Emergency Screener having been completed prior to arrival at the Emergency Department, the MHEART team was able to provide the attending Emergency Department physician with a direct report, resulting

in 31% of individuals receiving immediate care and 61% of individuals receiving care within two hours. All 16 individuals were admitted to hospital.

This use of the interRAI assessment suite of tools results in a significant decrease in wait times, improved care for individuals and their families and more efficient use of our healthcare resources overall.

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