



## SAFE Unit Pilot Project wraps up at The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre

March 3, 2021 – Ottawa, Ontario

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:** *Proof-of-concept for returning frail elderly from hospital to home established.*

An innovative pilot project at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa has established the viability of a specialized 'step-down' unit that helps seniors transition from hospital to home more quickly, more safely and less expensively. Called "Sub-Acute Care for Frail Elderly" (SAFE), the three-year pilot project was initiated in a 20-bed unit at the Perley Rideau in 2018, in conjunction with The Ottawa Hospital, Bruyère Research Institute and ICES and with funding from the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care.

"Early on, we recognized the pivotal role that a long-term-care home such as the Perley Rideau could play in helping seniors awaiting discharge from hospital return to their homes," said Perley Rideau CEO Akos Hoffer. "Even though it had to be prematurely suspended due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the SAFE Unit pilot project has confirmed the potential of step-down units speeding the transition of frail elderly patients from hospital to home and, in the process, freeing up much more expensive acute care hospital beds and staff."

The pilot project compared two groups of older adults awaiting discharge from three local hospitals: The Ottawa Hospital, Queensway Carleton Hospital and Montfort Hospital. More than 150 were transferred to the SAFE Unit at the Perley Rideau, while a control group of similar patients remained in hospital. Even though the SAFE patients had more complex disease profiles, such as coronary heart disease or cancer, they spent less time in hospital, were more likely to return directly to their homes, and were less likely to require home care, transfer to convalescent or long-term care, or return to hospital through the ER.

The Perley Rideau's Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care is overseeing completion of two final studies of the SAFE Unit concept. Further evaluation by the participating hospitals and the Ontario Ministry of Health is anticipated.

During the pandemic, the SAFE beds were temporarily used as an isolation unit for COVID patients. They will be returned to the long-term care home's inventory of community beds for new admissions.

Perley Rideau residents have been COVID-free for more than seven months.

As many SAFE staff as possible will be integrated into our long-term-care home and in positions throughout our community of care.

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre is one of the largest and most progressive long-term care homes in Ontario. In addition to the 450 long-term care beds for Veterans and members of the public, the Perley Rideau campus includes a Seniors Village with 139 independent-living apartments. It employs a staff of more than 850.



# HOME SAFE & SOUND



**SAFE**  
care patient

vs



**Regular**  
care patient

A case-control study shows reduced length of hospital stay, improved function and independence, and increased likelihood of returning home.

**18%**

fewer  
days in  
hospital

**38%**

more likely to  
be discharged  
to home

**3 times**

less likely to  
require home or  
community care

The SAFE Unit (Sub-Acute Care for Frail Elderly) is an innovative 20-bed program at The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa. Eligible acute-care hospital patients move to the SAFE Unit, where they access the individualized medical and restorative care needed to recover and return home.