

Alice is in her 60s. She has a complex health story including a history of kidney cancer, chronic back pain caused by arthritis, high cholesterol. She has also had two brain aneurysms clipped. Additionally, Alice lives with PTSD, Depression and Anxiety. In 2015, Alice visited her local emergency department 16 times. Toward the end of 2015, she was referred to Health Links.

At this time, Alice's primary goals were to manage mental health and chronic pain. She was already working with a mental health case manager at the time, and in partnership with health links, Alice worked toward seeing a trauma specialist. She has graduated out of case management services and continues to see her trauma specialist bi-weekly. A significant reduction not only in ER visits, but also crisis calls has been noted.

Along with her mental health, Alice found her pain to be through the roof, often rating it 10/10. Alice found it difficult to talk about her pain with her care team. A care conference was organized and a plan was made to try several different therapies that may assist with pain. Although Alice still feels pain, she talks about her restored hope, knowing that there continue to be options for her. Alice has also learned about the correlation between mental pain and physical pain and knowing that she is working on both has increased her comfort with talking about both issues.

Late in 2015, Alice was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. On top of her other health issues, she felt very overwhelmed with her cancer diagnosis and found that her appointments left her more confused than informed. Alice often felt that the conversations were too medical and not in a language that she was used to. Health links was able to partner with mental health services to ensure that Alice had a worker to attend most of her appointments with her and help her with any questions that she may have. Alice expressed on several occasions her comfort in asking questions moving forward and she can proudly say that she is cancer free today!

Through all of this, it came to light that Alice did best when she was seeing members of her care team regularly. It was recognized however, that these were not social relationships. She was connected with a peer support worker who sees her on a weekly basis and helps her to engage in activities that she enjoys – something that has not happened for many years. Health Links assisted Alice with other goals as well. She would like to lose weight and was connected with a local dietician that would be able to assist with this. Her peer worker has been supportive in this as they often go for walks together. With some advocacy and partnership with primary care and social assistance, Alice was able to secure a special diet allowance. Finally, prior to working with health links, Alice was also experiencing barriers to accessing her medical appointments due to lack of affordable and available transportation in her area. Transportation was secured with the support of social assistance and Alice feels confident in using these resources now. After working intensively with health links for over a year, Alice has reduced her ER visits by over half, only visiting the emergency room 7 times in 2016. "I've found it very helpful. It informed me of a lot of things I didn't know. When I was really afraid, Health Links was there and it really helped to be able to talk about and understand my cancer diagnosis".