

Cornerstone

ELDERCARE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Every senior deserves the chance to age with dignity

Thank you for helping us bring comfort to the heart of emergency care

Thanks to support from donors like you, Eldercare Foundation has launched an Island-wide initiative that has the potential to transform the experience of emergency care for older adults across Vancouver Island.

Hospital emergency departments can be overwhelming and frightening for seniors, especially those living with dementia, cognitive impairment, or sensory challenges. Bright lights, noise, and long waits often trigger confusion and agitation – contributing to delirium, increased risk of falls, and decline that can prevent seniors from returning home.



Emergency room physician Dr. Savannah Forrester and patient Brenda Pohl with the comfort cart at Victoria General Hospital, made possible by donations to Eldercare Foundation of Vancouver Island. Photo by Adrian Lam, Times Colonist.

Comfort Carts are changing that reality.

This evidence-based initiative provides immediate, personalized support through thoughtfully selected items: soft blankets and neck pillows for physical comfort, pocket talkers for those with hearing loss, and sensory activities that calm and engage. Each cart is stocked with tools that help reduce anxiety, prevent agitation, and support recovery. All without medication.

Research shows that comfort-based interventions like these can help to reduce depression and anxiety, prevent delirium and falls, shorten hospital stays, and help seniors return home stronger. By addressing distress early, Comfort Carts protect what matters most: the ability to age with dignity in one's own community.

Developed in partnership with Island Health clinicians and seniors' health experts, Comfort Carts have been delivered to thirteen Emergency Departments – bringing compassionate support and relief for patients, their caregivers, and staff alike. "Through collaboration, innovation, and your support, we're ensuring that older adults receive the comfort and respect they deserve during their most vulnerable moments," says Tom Arnold, Eldercare's Executive Director.

Impact of Comfort Cart “immediate and profound”

Within hours of Eldercare staff delivering Comfort Carts to acute care sites across the Island, Jenny Anderson, RN, Manager of Access and Flow at Cowichan District Hospital, wrote to say “the impact was immediate and profound.” After bringing several items to seniors waiting to transition into long-term care, she shared a few moments that stood out:



A senior woman is now listening to music in her chair — singing softly and swaying with a big smile on her face. She expressed such genuine gratitude that it brought tears to the eyes of the staff who witnessed her joy.



A gentleman who spent his career in the music industry has been listening to the radio, happily reminiscing about his working life.



A male patient who needed reading glasses finally has a pair that fits just right — and is now happily immersed in his murder mystery novel.



“Thank you again to Eldercare Foundation,” says Anderson. “These items have brought comfort, joy, stimulation, and dignity at a time when our patients need it most.”

Give comfort today.

Your gift of \$50 will provide an eye mask, reading glasses, cozy blanket and a pocket talker (to amplify sound) to an Island senior in emergency. Visit eldercarefoundation.org/givecomfort



Eldercare staff hit the road, delivering Comfort Carts for seniors to 13 Emergency Departments across Vancouver Island



Port McNeill Hospital



Cowichan District Hospital



Comox Valley Hospital

Fully-stocked Comfort Carts are now in the following Emergency Departments:

Cormorant Island Health Centre | Cowichan District Hospital | Lady Minto / Gulf Islands Hospital | Nanaimo Regional General Hospital | North Island Hospital – Campbell River

Did you know? Delirium is a medical emergency

According to the Canadian Geriatrics Journal, delirium is reported in 8–17% of emergency department (ED) visits in Canada among seniors. It is associated with multiple poor outcomes including higher rates of mortality, higher rates of long-term cognitive and functional decline, longer hospital stays and higher rates of not being able to return home and inappropriate transfers to long-term care.

“Delirium can be quite common in patients with cognitive impairment or dementia,” says Dr. Savannah Forrester, “but it is different than dementia. “Delirium is a medical emergency that can have significant impacts for people.”

Dr. Forrester is an Island Health emergency physician with a background in geriatric emergency medicine and one of the Comfort Cart initiative’s consulting clinicians. She describes delirium as a sudden change in mental state that can present as a brand-new confusion. “The patient might seem like they're rambling and disoriented. We see this as a type of brain failure where the body is experiencing significant physiological stress. Recognizing it early is so important for improved outcomes.”

Early interventions like sensory aids (glasses/hearing aids/fidget blankets) and promoting quality sleep (earplugs/eye masks) can support seniors in distress, including those with delirium. For seniors in a chaotic emergency department environment, these aids – available in Comfort Carts – can offer a sense of comfort and calm.

“This collaboration proves that when we combine passionate people and patient-centred care teams with truly generous donors, we can transform some of the hardest moments into ones filled with comfort, dignity, and compassion,” says Andrea Rantucci, Senior Specialist in Island Health's Strategic Clinical Network and project champion. ***“I feel enormous gratitude for the heartfelt generosity of Eldercare Foundation.”***



West Coast General Hospital



Saanich Peninsula Hospital



Port Hardy Hospital

North Island Hospital – Comox Valley | Port Hardy Hospital | Port McNeill Hospital |
Royal Jubilee Hospital | Saanich Peninsula Hospital | Tofino General Hospital |
Victoria General Hospital | West Coast General Hospital

Every Gift Makes a Difference



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- I would like to make a monthly gift of: _____
- Starting on date: _____

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Give comfort today at eldercarefoundation.org/givecomfort



Research shows that comfort-based interventions can reduce anxiety, prevent agitation, and support recovery. As well, they can help prevent downstream complications such as falls, delirium, prolonged hospital stays, and inappropriate transfers to long-term care.

By addressing distress early, Comfort Carts aim to protect what matters most: the ability to age with dignity in one's own community.



Paying Tribute to Someone Special

The individuals listed below have been remembered by friends and loved ones with a donation to Eldercare Foundation, made in memory or in honour, between January 14, 2026 and March 16, 2026. Eldercare is grateful to receive such meaningful gifts that, in paying tribute to someone special, help enhance care and quality of life for other seniors in need.

In Memory: Monty Holding, Gail M. MacDonald, Margot Mears, Walter T. Carter

In Honour: Linda Jones



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