

connections update

Quality and Safety at St. Joseph's Health Centre

Providing the safest care possible to our patients is very important to us. We have a saying at St. Joseph's Health Centre that "patient safety is everybody's responsibility." So why is this important to us? As a community teaching hospital serving the diverse communities of south west Toronto, our patients and their families rely on us each and every day to provide safe, quality care. There are many initiatives and strategies in place that go into helping us achieve our strategic commitment of Putting Patients First by providing the safest care.

Over the next year, our newsletter, *Connections*, will provide our patients and their families as well as our staff, physicians and volunteers, with information on these initiatives to report on how we're doing on delivering on our commitment to provide safe, quality care.

Read on to learn more about what our Diagnostic Imaging Department is doing to support quality care and patient safety at St. Joseph's Health Centre. The Emergency and Critical Care Program have also been doing a lot of work on patient safety and quality within the program and through collaborations across the Health Centre - and you can read all about that in the *Connections*, July 19th issue or by [clicking here](#).

Quality and Safety in the Diagnostic Imaging Department

Providing exceptional service in a timely and efficient manner and Using Resources Wisely is the key focus of the Diagnostic Imaging (DI) Department's work to support St. Joseph's corporate Quality Strategy. "Diagnostic Imaging is central to diagnosis and is a fundamental service provided at the Health Centre," said Michael Hierlihy, Director of Clinical Services.

Over the next year, the department will be working on several initiatives to further enhance service delivery that supports the increasing demand for DI services. Two specific areas of focus will include reducing wait times for CT and MRI imaging studies as well as eliminating the use of porters to transport ambulatory patients from the Emergency Department (ED) to DI for their tests.

"We are continually trying to find a balance to accommodate all patients – from the Emergency Department,

inpatient units and our ambulatory appointments – so it is critical to find ways where we can modify work flow to be as efficient as possible (to meet everyone's needs)," said Michael Hierlihy, Director of Clinical Support Services. "Over the last year, volumes across the department have increased by 7%," he said.

The idea of looking at eliminating the need of having a porter to transfer any ambulatory patient between the ED and DI is really about Using our Resources Wisely and to better support patient access and flow, said Brian Chan, Manager of Diagnostic Imaging. "What we are trying to do is to free up our porters for other urgent jobs/tasks by having the ambulatory ED patients who are capable of coming over to DI for their test and then back to the ED independently. Before this initiative started, there was a misconception that all patients from the ED must be accompanied by a porter to DI for their test. However, this is not the case."

Chan adds that the two departments have been working collaboratively over the last few years, looking at every

aspect of work flow and patient flow (between the areas) so this partnership helped in identifying areas where improvements can be made. By reducing dependency on our porters on transferring patients who are well enough to get to DI on their own, means decreased wait and better turnaround times. "With the ED being the front door of the hospital, if we can determine efficiently and effectively whether or not the patient can go home by performing the right diagnostic test(s) and providing the right diagnosis in a timely fashion, it enables the rest of the hospital to plan accordingly," said Chan. "That's why it is so important to have the right test done at the right time in order to triage our patients timely."

The department has also seen success over the last 18 months in reducing wait times for ultrasound exams and has been able to provide service within two hours from the test being ordered. Building on this success, the department wanted to take a similar approach to decrease wait times for other imaging tests such as CT and MRI scans.

We wanted to tackle these wait times because the demand is high, since they are the preferred, diagnostic imaging tests that physicians request for their patients, explained Hierlihy. The provincial target for wait times for these tests is 28 days and we are currently able to provide MRI service within 37 days. While above the provincial benchmark, St. Joseph's is considered one of the best in the city for wait times.

Chan adds that, "We've been in the position for the last three to four years, being named one of the places that employed best practices to sustain our success. But the pressure is on us because wait times (for CT and MRI) are creeping up on us no matter what we do." To ensure that wait times are managed well, Chan says that the department is very flexible on how we meet the demand for services. "We are constantly looking at our booking templates, protocols and also at our workflow (processes) to develop more efficient and effective ways of doing things. These efficiencies will help us save time and serve more patients."

"The way I see quality from a DI perspective is (that we need) to provide diagnosis accurately for patients in a timely fashion. And how we are able to deliver quality services in a timely manner is by being dependable, reliable and flexible," said Chan. "On top of those, being financially responsible and Using Resources Wisely are

equally important. Having all of these elements (in place) we can judge whether or not we are delivering on our quality commitment - to Put Patients First by providing the safest care."

Another important element in providing quality service to patients is that the DI department has been able to evolve and stay current through acquiring state-of-the-art technology. This is key because patients don't want to be receiving tests on antiquated equipment, said Hierlihy. The department offers a top of the line MRI machine, two 64-slice CT scanners, a brand new digital mammography machine and bone density scanner. The department is also undergoing an extensive layout re-design to support increased demand and a space that ultimately supports the best workflow for staff, while meeting the needs of our patients.

The Quality conversation continues on Chatter!

Remember to visit the home page of SJNet and start chatting about the great work that is being done with your quality team or across the Health Centre!

Some of the recent posts:

"A big congratulations to Anne Conroy for obtaining her Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) designation. Way to go Anne, 4 East is proud of you"

~ Posted by: Joe Brubaker (MASH)

"Thanks for all the info about Patient Registration Brian! Watch out for the August 3rd issue of Connections - going to be a good Q insert!"

~ Posted by: Gillian Brunning (CorpCom)

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