



GRAND ROUNDS

The senior management team of Renfrew Victoria Hospital experienced a new twist in their day-to-day hospital management responsibilities this summer.

They applied their knowledge and creativity to the challenges of operating a hospital in Kenora.

Located in the northwest corner of Ontario, Kenora's health care leadership has been struggling with the realities of providing quality health care on budget to a remote and rural population.

When the hospital found it difficult to balance the books and sign the required provincial accountability agreement, it was suggested that a peer review might help it develop some creative management solutions.

Renfrew Victoria Hospital's similar size and successful track record led officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the North West

Health Integration Network (LHIN) to invite CEO Randy Penney to take on the task. Penney was told that he could recruit anyone he wanted to help him review operations at Kenora's Lake of the Woods District Hospital and make recommendations for improvement. He immediately turned to his own management team at RVH for support.

"I know they can match the knowledge of anyone else in the province," he explains. "They've taken RVH this far, and it would only be appropriate to work with them on this new challenge."

So in August Penney traveled to Kenora with RVH's vice-presidents of finance, corporate services and patient care services, Paul Chatelain, Julia Boudreau and Nancy Kelly-Moore. They spent two days touring the facility and interviewing the board, management team, physicians, staff, representatives of

partner agencies and unions, and the area's LHIN. They also analyzed documentation on the hospital's budget and practices.

"It was a good experience for us," comments Chatelain. "We weren't going in there to lay down the law, or to ask their LHIN for more money. We were sharing as friendly neighbours."

"It was nice to share the stories about what we do," he adds, noting that a number of the Kenora participants commented on the positive spirit and good nature of the Renfrew team.

The end result will be more than a detailed report on how the facility can save money. While the final paper is still in the works, Penney notes that it will also outline added services the Kenora facility could provide to increase its revenues, and new ways to offer existing programs.

"We know that they can't simply slash expenditures or programs," he says. "We've put a lot of thought into how they can manage their hospital and continue to provide vigorous quality health care for the people of that area."

Before they left the Lake of the Woods district, the RVH team witnessed the launch of a new partnership between the Kenora hospital and their LHIN. They have agreed to continue to work together to implement the Renfrew team's suggestions and move forward on building a better, affordable health care model for their community.

"That's what we're aiming for," says Penney. "Advancing quality care for patients. We need to acknowledge the support of our board for allowing us the time away from our daily duties here to contribute to that goal in another part of the province."



Members of the RVH Senior Administration team are, from left, Randy Penney, Julia Boudreau, Nancy Kelly-Moore and Paul Chatelain.