

GRAND ROUNDS

Efficient health care service is dependent on many factors and patients may not be aware that they play an equal role in ensuring our community receives prompt service when needed.

Wait times for some services at Renfrew Victoria Hospital are increasing due to demand throughout Renfrew County for specialty testing in our Diagnostic Imaging department, the Sleep Lab, Respiratory Therapy department and for appointments in our Ambulatory Care clinics.

Compounding the problem are patients who fail to show up for their scheduled appointments, and cause unnecessary delays in the system.

Phil Crozier, head of the Diagnostic Imaging department, says when someone doesn't show up for their scheduled CT scan, Ultrasound, Mammogram or X-Ray, that appointment time is usually lost.

"It is impossible to fill the appointment slot when we do not have ample time to reschedule patients. Almost all these modalities require some type of patient preparation, which further complicates rescheduling," he says.

"Usually we have a lot of people waiting to get in who are really sick and need that test," and the "no shows" are taking that

time away from other patients, says Sandra Beimers, a secretary in the Diagnostic Imaging department.

"There is an immediate impact on other patients and our staff, and we also experience an impact on our visiting specialists," notes RVH Vice-President of Corporate Services, Julia Boudreau. "One of the factors that influences a visiting specialist's decision to provide service in our local hospital is based on the volume of work that is present. When specialists drive from the city, there is an expectation that their schedule will be full. However, when a patient does not show up for an appointment, it impacts negatively on the waiting list for the specialist, and also for the specialist's schedule for the day."

She says the goal is to attract and retain a wide variety of specialists in Renfrew, in all departments, and to achieve that goal everyone needs to be considerate and respectful of the processes.

The hospital has a policy in place to address patients who fail to show up for their scheduled testing, without giving at least 24 hours advanced notice, explains Boudreau.

Implementing a cost to the patients for missed appointments began as an attempt to shorten the wait lists, provide prompt patient care and provide more efficient Diagnostic Imaging services, adds Crozier.

"There is also a loss in revenue to the organization when these outpatient diagnostic tests are scheduled and not performed and, in some cases, this revenue loss is significant," states Boudreau.

"In the end it is an expensive process for the hospital," comments Crozier, who says that it more than doubles the cost per case since the original appointment time is lost and in most cases the patient reschedules to take up another appointment and extra clerical time to arrange the rescheduling—all contributing to longer wait times.

Beimers says it takes away from time to do other work in the office as she and her colleagues have to deal with the extra paperwork when someone doesn't present in the

x-ray waiting room on time. "We register them in the morning before the day begins and then need to cancel everything and send a notice off to the finance office, who then sends a bill to the client who has missed an appointment."

Once patients have paid the fee, they can be rescheduled for another appointment.

The no show fee for the Sleep Lab has recently been increased to \$100, CT scan is \$50 and \$25 for all other missed appointments.

If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, please contact the hospital as soon as possible at 613-432-4851, and the switchboard operator will help guide your call to the appropriate department.



Sandra Beimers, Secretary in RVH's Diagnostic Imaging department, sees firsthand the negative effects that cancelled test appointments have on the system.