

# GRAND ROUNDS

A more complete range of health care services has been made available at RVH through our linkages with the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN).

“This service has grown a tremendous amount in the past year,” comments RVH Vice-President of Patient Care Services, Chris Ferguson.

In 2011, RVH was affiliated with just 24 consultants in 17 different specialities across the network. The service expanded to 50 consultants in 30 different areas in 2012. Currently there are 57 consultants at our fingertips.

The growth is due to an increase in funding for the program that has allowed the hospital to employ a full-time facilitator.

“The new funding from the Champlain LHIN has allowed us to grow and expand an already busy service with the focus of providing care closer to home to a significant number of patients,” adds Ferguson.

The OTN enables more timely access to care and reduces the physical distance needed to travel for that care using state-of-the-art video conferencing technologies

over a secure network. RVH relies on the service for patient consultations with specialists located at other hospitals. OTN also offers many educational events, which are regularly attended by our nursing staff and physicians.

“In some cases we’ve been able to decrease wait times to see some of the specialists,” says Bonnie Nolan, RPN Facilitator of the OTN program for RVH.

“It cuts out the driving time for some of our specialists, too,” explains RVH OTN Coordinator and Nurse Manager, Kim Dick. She notes as an example that Dr. Nicole Delbrouck is able to see her patients located in Barry’s Bay, Deep River, Pembroke and Arnprior in a more timely manner.

Benefits for local patients include less financial strain incurred in transportation costs and high parking fees in larger centres, and less stress having to navigate around an unfamiliar hospital, adds Dick.

“Since the allocation of Renfrew County’s enhanced funding for the Telemedicine Nursing Initiative in April 2012, significant growth and expansion has been recognized in all the identified priority areas: mental

health, pre-diabetes and diabetes, complex health conditions and pre-/post-op care,” explains Karen Roosen, Chair of Renfrew County Subregional Telemedicine Network.

“Renfrew has been working collaboratively with our Renfrew County Subregional Telemedicine Network and has demonstrated particular growth and expansion in psychiatry, pre-op, respiratory, pediatrics, cardiac rehab and dermatology.”

Regular visiting physicians have been able to take advantage of the program to reduce their commuting hours, as is the case for Dr. Jennifer Block. The Respiriologist has worked with RVH patients for more than three years. To decrease the need to travel in unpredictable winter weather, she has been meeting patients on a monitor in one of our Telemedicine rooms.

She drives to Renfrew once each month and conducts two appointment days on the OTN and, like Dr. Delbrouck, is able to see more patients each time.

“Once we start communication and patients can see for themselves there’s no noticeable lag, they realize it’s no different than meeting in person,” says Dr. Block, mentioning that many people are already

accustomed to talking online using services like Skype in their personal lives.

Much of the success of the program is related to the enthusiasm of Dick and Nolan, notes Ferguson. Two other nurses also assist Dick with programming Telemedicine appointments.

Nolan says that she provides any nursing requirements, special camera equipment or stethoscope connection to the monitoring system on one of five platforms located throughout the hospital.

“Bonnie does so much work behind the scenes and everyone at RVH has done a phenomenal job to grow the service for Renfrew patients,” says Dr. Block.



**Dr. Jennifer Block, Respirologist, is able to consult with patients in Renfrew from her office in Ottawa via the Ontario Telemedicine Network.**