

## GRAND ROUNDS

### Bringing out the creative side of dialysis patients

A unique new project underway in the nephrology unit is turning many patients into budding artists.

Using tiny pieces of wood no larger than a toonie and paint, Ottawa University student Valiyah Khurshid is bringing Arts in Dialysis to RVH and to the satellite units in Pembroke and Barry's Bay.

"Patients and staff are painting small, personalized pieces of a mural which will be put together to form a larger piece of artwork," explains Khurshid, a Health Sciences and Visual Arts student. "This artwork will be put up in the waiting room for patients, family and staff members to enjoy and be reminded of the presence and interconnectedness of one another."

As the daughter of RVH Nephrologist, Dr. Amtul Musawir, she wanted to volunteer over the summer months in the unit, and has a passion for the arts.

After discussing the volunteering options with her mom, they figured this was the perfect way to blend Khurshid's expertise and interact with the patients during treatments.

Krista Helferty, RVH social worker in the unit, is overseeing the project and says that this is a fresh idea to RVH, but it is very popular in the U.K. in various forms (creative writing, poetry, painting, drawing, etc.). "There is an active program in Saskatoon—which first piqued my interest—as well as one in Vancouver."

Khurshid's talents and interest in health sciences have been a great fit, says Helferty. "Our patients always like meeting new people while they're sitting here and the project has been great to help pass the time."

Although many of the patients are hesitant at first to explore their creative side, Khurshid notes that "everyone is really interested in the project and grateful to have someone different to talk to during their dialysis."

During her friendly visits, she takes her time to learn about each patient and their interests.

Then they get to work creating something meaningful—whether it is simply their favourite colour washed on the canvas, or an intricate scene. Some patients will sketch out their drawing and she will paint it in for them, and others will complete their piece all on their own.

The goal is to have every patient complete at least one piece; some family members

are getting their hands on the paint brushes too. Khurshid also wants staff members to contribute to the mosaic.

As for the design plan for the final piece of artwork? "I'm not quite sure what it will all look like yet, but I'm looking forward to seeing how it all comes together," Khurshid adds.



**Volunteer Valiyah Khurshid helps an RVH dialysis patient paint a personalized art piece that will become part of a mural in the waiting room.**