

Renfrew Victoria Hospital News Release

July 5, 2012

RVH—A “bright spot” in pediatric rural health care

Renfrew Victoria Hospital welcomed special guest speaker Alex Munter, the President and CEO of the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), at its Annual General Meeting on June 28.

He was accompanied by Dennise Albrecht, the Director of Partnerships and Advocacy for CHEO. RVH was the first in the Champlain LHIN to partner with CHEO as part of their Emergency Care Outreach program.

Physicians and nurses from CHEO provide training, professional support, and care pathways for members of the medical team at RVH, “so patients can receive the best possible pediatric care,” explained Munter. Further opportunities are available through telemedicine and lectures offered by CHEO to build the knowledge and expand capacity in pediatric health issues.

CHEO pediatrician Dr. Anne Rowan-Legg also travels to Renfrew twice a month to provide direct care to young patients, saving approximately 400 families the trek into Ottawa.

He said CHEO benefits just as much as RVH as a result of the successful partnership, especially from Dr. Rowan-Legg’s clinic.

“We have two mandates: one is to teach and research—it is our responsibility to lead and train others in pediatric care; and the second is to our regional community hospitals so we can provide children and youth with access to care as close to home as possible.”

As a result of the work done at RVH, CHEO is currently looking to broaden and expand the programs across the Champlain region. “RVH is that bright spot,” he said, referring to being a leader in a grassroots approach to health care.

CHEO is recognized for the excellence of its programs—one of the region’s busiest emergency departments, some 70 outpatient clinics, internationally recognized research and specialized programs that include everything from cardiac care to rehabilitation, from oncology to orthopedics and beyond.

But looking at the underlying factors that will shape children’s health as they become adults, Munter said there are two significant issues among the youth seeking help at CHEO—mental health and childhood obesity.

He equates the issue to having similar dynamics as caring for our senior population in that services need to be readily available within the community.

“We have to make sure our children get help before it becomes a crisis situation,” Munter said, adding that mild to severe mental health issues such as mood disorders, anxiety or depression affect one in five youth.

While obesity affects the entire population from a health perspective, Renfrew County has higher rates of overweight teens compared to the rest of the LHIN. He noted the trend shows that of 26 per cent of teens who are overweight today will cause severe strain on our health systems 20 years



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from now when, if their trajectory doesn't change, we will have the highest rates of cardiac disease and diabetes in history.

"That burden is something this hospital or any other hospital cannot bear." It is beyond the scope of the current health care system and Munter said he is working with a number of different agencies to develop proactive solutions.

"But we need to deliver the care today so we can look ahead and protect the kids of our community tomorrow."

"The premise and the promise of CHEO is the future," he stated, and the children and youth are who we need to be investing in today for tomorrow.

"We are very excited to work with RVH to be able to deliver on those promises," he concluded before taking audience questions.

The rates of mental health patients were of great concern to many of the board members in attendance, but Munter assured that in our culture, we're already seeing a noticeable decrease in the stigma related to mental health issues. People generally have a better understanding of mental illnesses, which leads to earlier diagnosis.

"Parents are talking about it with their kids, so there's more understanding there. People are seeking help and parents are seeking help. When we can intervene early, it can change the entire trajectory of their lives." He later mentioned the best place to intervene is in schools. There are also mental health clinics available in the city, crisis response teams and 24-hour crisis phone lines.

RVH Board of Directors Chair Andy Boldt told Munter that it was encouraging to hear we are doing well at RVH. "It is exciting to listen to your vision to deal with some of the challenges we have here in Renfrew County."

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