Family doctors and nurse practitioners gathered in Renfrew this week to further their knowledge in women’s health.

Organized by the Women’s Wellness Clinic of Renfrew Victoria Hospital, the educational sessions gave rural health professionals an opportunity to enhance their expertise in diagnosing and managing abnormal uterine bleeding.

“It’s one of the most common reasons that perimenopausal and menopausal women are referred to our clinic,” explains RVH Nurse Practitioner Alison Collins, coordinator of the hospital’s women’s wellness clinic.

“Our goal was to make local professionals more aware of how they can navigate their patients through the referral options,” adds Nancy Kelly, vice-president of patient care services at RVH and a member of the organizing committee for the continuing education sessions.

Twenty physicians and nurse practitioners travelled from throughout the Ottawa Valley to participate. They included nurse practitioners from the family health care centres in Whitewater Region and Petawawa, as well as professionals from Deep River to Shawville, Quebec.

The lead presenter was Dr. Nathalie Gamache, a gynecologist at the Shirley E. Greenberg Women’s Health Centre in Ottawa and one of the specialists who travels to Renfrew to provide care through the women’s wellness clinic.

Dr. Gamache presented the latest information on the topic in the morning, and then led a hands-on session in the afternoon, guiding the participants through tips and techniques to perform gynecological exams and procedures. The afternoon session was supported by the Ontario College of Family Physicians as part of its benign uterine conditions initiative which has resulted in similar workshops throughout the province.

RVH Radiologist Dr. David Lyons also led a session for the professionals gathered in Renfrew. As the director of diagnostic imaging at RVH, Dr. Lyons plays a key role in the management of abnormal uterine bleeding. He and his diagnostic imaging team perform and interpret pelvic ultrasounds and sonohysterograms, which are the key diagnostic imaging procedures used to determine the cause of the problem and select treatment options. His presentation included explanations of ultrasound images of fibroids and polyps.

The session for physicians was an extension of the women’s wellness clinic’s goal to provide ongoing education on women’s health issues.

Workshops and seminars have been organized in the past for the general public and for nurses.

“We wanted to extend our activities to family physicians,” says Collins. “Family doctors play a very significant role in women’s health, and we knew this was an