



GRAND ROUNDS

With an active caseload of more than 400 Renfrew County residents, the diabetes program at Renfrew Victoria Hospital has come a long way since it was first established 20 years ago.

RVH is one of five sites of the Renfrew County Diabetes Education Program working in partnership to ensure equitable and simplified access for clients.

According to Stats Canada, Renfrew County's prevalence rates for diabetes, hypertension and obesity are among the highest in the province. Renfrew County was identified as a priority area requiring additional resources to address the health needs of residents with diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes.

Today the program provides a solid framework of care planning for diabetic patients, which includes a full range of diabetes education classes for people living with the disease, assistance in insulin initiation and adjustment as well as insulin pump starts and follow-ups, glucose monitoring analysis and a monthly clinic with a diabetes specialist.

The diabetes education program is run by Registered Nurse Jessica Fitzgerald and Registered Dietitian Donna Reid, certified Diabetes Educators who teach people with diabetes how to effectively manage their disease to live full and healthy lives. Group classes teach participants about hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), and how to monitor levels, as well as healthy eating, exercises and medications for people with diabetes. The group classes are followed by individual sessions and group follow-up meetings at three months and nine months.

The program provides counselling for newly-diagnosed or long-term patients with Type 1, Type 2, or gestational diabetes, as well as pre-diabetes patients.

RVH is an Assistive Devices Program-approved site, Fitzgerald says, which allows them to help with insulin initiation, adjustments with a delegations order from their family physician, and insulin pump starts and follow-ups. The RVH diabetes education program can provide patients with

a continuous glucose monitor sensor to wear for 72 hours with a doctor's order.

RVH also offers an Endocrinology clinic with Dr. P. Hierlihy, a diabetes specialist based in Ottawa. About 20 patients attend the four-hour clinic each month. A referral from a physician is required.

Last fall, the diabetes program received additional funding through Ontario's Diabetes Strategy, which extended Fitzgerald's part-time position to full-time from January until the end of March 2011.

Janice Verch-Whittington, Nurse Manager at RVH, says that expanding Fitzgerald's work-hours "allowed her more time to complete a number of additional projects and to implement new patient management policies."

The new initiatives will enhance the effectiveness of the diabetes program already in place at RVH, Verch-Whittington says.

At the top of the list of new initiatives was completing a comprehensive care map for inpatients with diabetes. "It's their plan of care when admitted to the hospital, ensuring we address any diabetes-related issues off the bat and all the way through," Fitzgerald says.

Fitzgerald also developed medical directives on how to obtain blood work for orphan patients, and she updated hypoglycemia procedures. "There is now a solid guideline on how to treat patients with low blood sugar," she says.

The full work-week also gave Fitzgerald the opportunity to train two of the nursing staff to be designated diabetes leaders on the active-care floor. They were taught how to properly use a glucometer and how to administer insulin.

In addition, Fitzgerald developed a teaching package for staff leaders to assist patients who are dealing with diabetes. This is not only beneficial to the nursing staff and patients, but it also enables Fitzgerald to take on more of a consulting role in the future.

PLEASE NOTE: You don't need a doctor's referral to sign up for diabetes information classes, but you do need to register in advance. Friends and family members are welcome.

For more information, please contact Donna Reid at (613) 432-4851, ext. 109 or Jessica Fitzgerald at (613) 432-4851, ext. 206.



Registered Dietitian Donna Reid and RN Jessica Fitzgerald, certified Diabetes Educators at RVH.