

GRAND ROUNDS

If you happen to pass through the halls of RVH and see a pooch waiting to ride the elevator to the third floor, don't be surprised. The Pet Therapy program is one of the many enhanced services provided at the hospital to our longer-term patients.

RVH's Vice-President of Patient Care Services Christene Ferguson says there's a complete team approach to care for patients on the third floor. "Our goal is always to maximize the patients' abilities and involvement as they wait to go to the next step of care on the continuum, which is often going home, if all goes well."

As an in-patient in the continuing care unit, daily health care extends past routine blood pressure checks and x-rays to include physical therapy, recreational programming and even special visits with a beloved family pet.

"The broad range of activities offered to the patients allows diversity and engagement, and we provide such a great variety to appeal to the many interests of the indi-

viduals, which is an excellent benefit to their overall health," comments Ferguson.

Working one-on-one and working towards functional independence is a major physical activity for the majority of third floor patients, explains physiotherapist Jennifer St. Michael. Just the simple act of tying their shoes—an act that most people take for granted—can be an exercise in daily living for the continuing care patients, and becomes part of their therapy.

"We always work towards a goal and it's very patient-centred; if they want to walk to the end of the hall, we practice every day until they can walk to the end of the hall," St. Michael says.

She says the activities offered as part of the Recreation Program are often huge motivators to get people out of their rooms and interacting with each other and are part of their recovery therapy.

Roxanne Nolan, head of the recreation department, and her team organize events, throw parties, play games and even bring in a

group of Grade 6 students from Our Lady of Fatima School every two weeks as part of the Adopt a Grandparent Program.

"We're just working to improve their quality of life while they're in the hospital, whether that be socially, emotionally or spiritually," notes Nolan. "We want them all to be the best they can be."

The calendar is usually packed full of activities and patients have the choice to participate or not. Nolan admits she's been seen coaxing people out of their rooms every now and then and usually the patient ends up with a big smile on their face at the end of the program.

"We have fun," Nolan says. "Fun and laughter are two things needed to get better."

Lynn Campbell, the third floor Nurse Manager, recognizes the significant benefits between patients and pets as well. While pets such as dogs had been allowed to visit the hospital for some time, Campbell developed an official Pet Policy during the summer that was approved in September.

Animal owners must seek approval prior to bringing a four-legged visitor, complete the necessary

paperwork and ensure the animal will be docile and not disrupt other patients.

Campbell occasionally brings in her own two-year-old Golden Retriever, Jasper, for Pet Therapy. Through this program, qualified animals are brought in to visit numerous patients for therapeutic purposes.

"It's a real floor event whenever there's a dog in the unit. It's exciting and it's really neat to see the sense of calming come to the patients. The whole mood changes for them and for our staff. No one can resist them," Campbell adds.



Patient Ken Rekowski feels very happy when Developmental Services Worker Sarah O'Connor brings Ozzy to the third floor at RVH for a visit.