

of Competence. & Compassion

A patient-centric model for thoracic surgery delivers outstanding results



Dr. John Dickie, Chief of Surgery at LHO and head of the thoracic surgery section



Samantha Mastin, Nurse Navigator at the Diagnostic Assessment Unit at Peterborough

The new delivery model for thoracic surgery in this Region is a brilliant one whose time has come. With recommendations from physicians, nurses, allied health professionals and administrators, the Clinical Services Plan (CSP) Steering Committee has created a framework by which thoracic surgical and medical services will be delivered with exceptional quality, accessibility and sustainability for a rapidly growing demographic.

This story begins with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) that was formed to bring connectivity and continuity of care to patients across communities. In this case, the Central East LHIN is the approval body for Scarborough to Peterborough and all points between.

After Cancer Care Ontario studied the issues, it recommended that the thoracic surgeries in the province be delivered in a Level 1 Centre that can accommodate the highest standards for all patients. In response, the Central East LHIN formed the CSP Steering Committee and ultimately approved Lakeridge Health Oshawa (LHO) as the Centre for Excellence in Thoracic Surgery by which all such surgeries are consolidated within the LHO facility.

THE OBVIOUS CHOICE

“Certainly our geography was compelling,” says Dr. John Dickie, chief of surgery at LHO and head of the thoracic surgery section. “We are, after all, central in our LHIN. But we’re also attached to the R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer

Centre (MDRCC)—although not every thoracic surgery is cancer related, a predominate number are and having the Cancer Centre next door is clearly beneficial. We’ve been performing thoracic surgeries here for a long time, so we have the required staff and expertise in place and we also have the critical support of our administration for the expansion that this new designation requires. There is no one reason why we were chosen as the Level 1 Centre—we are well-suited for the designation in several different ways.”

On September 13, 2010, the Regional Centre of Excellence in Thoracic Surgery was officially launched at Lakeridge Health Oshawa. “I’m pleased to tell you that the program is working as well in practice as it did on paper,” says Dickie. “The part that’s really critical to this model and that centralizes the care is the introduction of Diagnostic Assessment Units. We’ve located one unit in Peterborough, one in Oshawa and a third in Scarborough so that every patient in our LHIN has close access to the best care. A nurse navigator at each unit follows the patient from assessment to surgery to recovery. This brings a continuity of care and huge efficiency to the diagnostic assessment protocol.”

STREAMLINING CARE

Samantha Mastin, Thoracic Nurse Navigator for Peterborough, agrees that her role helps to effectively identify patient needs earlier in the process. “We receive referrals from emergency rooms, family doctors and other specialists

Regional Centre of Excellence



at the Central Referral Office in MDRCC,” says Mastin. “The referral goes to the demographic unit where the assigned nurse navigator can expedite the process. I’m in charge of Peterborough; I triage the referrals and do a telephone assessment with the patients. They may need services in place before their appointment with a surgeon and they may even be so ill that they require my intervention to get them to the hospital immediately.”

In addition to closing gaps and facilitating a speedier process, Mastin will organize a plan of care for each patient. “We set up dietitians, social workers and other resources as we evaluate needs,” says Mastin. “We’re also able to respond quickly when a change is required in the plan of care. We can step in between appointments,

making the process timelier, and we also make sure that our patients are seeing the right specialists and getting to where they have to go.”

Clearly, the nurse navigator is critical to good medicine, but it is a role that also addresses the deep emotional toll of surgery and, quite possibly, cancer treatment. “This is just a wonderful group of people,” says Marie Lafonte, a cheerful and gracious senior facing lung surgery. “Samantha Mastin is very helpful and she will stay with me all the way through this. I know I’m in good hands.”


“I think it helps to have a constant caregiver who can shoulder the burden of logistics for the patient and make sure everything that can be done is being done,” says Mastin with a smile. “I respect the responsibility of my role, and it’s gratifying to be there for people like Marie.”

LOOKING AHEAD

As Lakeridge Health Oshawa grows into its new status, Dickie predicts a tripling in volume of thoracic surgeries. “There are certainly benefits in this new role,” says Dickie.

“Evidence suggests that when you focus your expertise in one centre, that institution with the greater volumes of surgery will have better results. We also realize that our designation as the leader in this field will help to attract and retain quality staff—these are the kind of growth numbers we welcome.”

Of course, even the best ideas are doomed without the right people in place. As we examine LHO’s patient-centric balance of competence and compassion, it becomes ever more clear that this is a brilliant idea whose time has come.

Congratulations to all the stakeholders whose dedication and professionalism has led to the well-deserved designation of Lakeridge Health Oshawa as the Regional Centre of Excellence for Thoracic Surgery. 

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