



New intensive care unit means better patient care



Sean De Jardine an RN in York Central Hospital's spacious new ICU works with one of the new touch screen monitors which are in each patient room. The new area offers bright natural lighting and views of the local conservation lands from most patient rooms.

By Stefanie Kreibe

York Central Hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) has moved up, literally. The hospital's spacious new ICU is housed on the top floor of the hospital's new Town of Richmond Hill Wing. The newly opened ICU currently offers 18 private patient rooms with the ability to gear up to 22, in the future.

"When a patient is in intensive care, it's a very anxious time for patients and family members," says Linda Myles, Acting Program Manager, ICU and Ambulatory Care. "The new ICU unit provides the team with an excellent environment for providing compassionate and expert care. Natural light and large private rooms make for a more positive experience for patients and family members."

The old ICU was originally built in 1974 for a much smaller local population. Now serving more than 1,100 patients in a year, the former 10-bed unit offered only two isolation rooms and had curtains dividing

the remaining 8 patients. In recent years, the hospital added an additional four bed satellite unit, which was inconveniently located on a different floor from the main unit. In addition to the main and satellite units, ICU patients were also cared for in beds borrowed from the recovery room and the emergency department.

The new space offers a large, bright working area with wide halls, plenty of storage space and large windows surrounding the entire unit. Nine rooms are negative pressure rooms and the unit features two airborne infection isolation rooms.

Caring for intensive care patients involves not only the patient, but the families as well. With this in mind, the new unit also features two family waiting rooms, one with a microwave and refrigerator for visitors use.

Each patient room offers private comfortable surroundings while still providing easy access to patients and the capability to ventilate each patient with an oscillator, if necessary. New touch screen monitors provide easier input and documentation as well as links to clinical resources in every room.

The hospital has taken some key measures in ensuring the transition to the new space is a smooth one, not only for the families of patients, but for the staff and physicians who work there as well. The unit has a large conference room that can be divided for presentations and educational sessions as well as new specialty beds including a motorized bariatric bed which reduces the strain on staff.

"The new unit is three times the size of the former area," says Sean De Jardine, RN in the ICU. "It's great working in the new and expanded space. The new environment and increased natural lighting makes for a much nicer day at work."

While working, every nurse and physician carries a portable phone, making communication across the department easier. Also helping to make the transition to the new expanded unit smoother is the addition of new permanent staffing including dedicated Respiratory Therapists and ICU Assistants to help nurses. The unit also hosts a Clinical Educator, Clinical Practice Leader, Pharmacist, Dietician, Physiotherapist and Social Worker and enough space and computers for them to work in the area when they're not at the bedside.

Other hospital services available to the ICU include Professional Practice support (including support for those nurses seeking specialty certification from the Canadian Nurses Association). The team also includes Speech and Language Pathologists, Wound care Specialists, Spiritual Care (with community support from many faiths and denominations) and Infection Control Practitioners.

The new space also enables the ICU Clinical Director, Manager, Educator and Clinical Practice Leader to be accessible with

offices right in the unit.

For nursing staff looking for an opportunity to expand their expertise, opportunities exist to work on the Critical Care Response Team (CCRT), a team that follows the progress of patients once discharged from ICU to other care units for a period of time, as well as serving as a resource to all departments when they have concerns about a patient.

“Our ICU is one of the best kept secrets. We’ve always had the staff and resources to provide top notch ICU care, but we now have a brand new facility in which to provide that care. It’s modern, spacious and beautiful. Having worked and visited dozens of intensive care units in the GTA and US including Harvard’s Massachusetts General Hospital, I can truly say that we have one of the nicest ICUs to work in. It won’t be a secret too long,” says Dr. Eric Chu, Clinical Director of Intensive Care at York Central Hospital.

York Central Hospital is a large, full-service community hospital with over 69,000 visits annually to its emergency department, serving a population of more than 400,000 in Southwest York Region and beyond. The hospital is located in one of Canada’s fastest growing communities. With a complement of 472 beds, the hospital is home to the District Stroke Centre, York Regional Chronic Kidney Disease Program, and York Region Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Care Centre. For more information visit www.yorkcentral.on.ca

Stefanie Kreibe works in communications at York Central Hospital.

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