

Ajax-Pickering hospital works to improve service with shoulder clinic

New website provides patient and physician information regarding shoulder care

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AJAX -- Pickering resident David Cicchelli is no stranger to shoulder injuries.

"It was extreme pain," he recalls of tearing his rotator cuff in three places, as well as his bicep, before undergoing shoulder surgery at Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering hospital.

While not everyone who experiences shoulder pain has to go under the knife, more than 30,000 patients in the Central East Local Health Integration Network alone visit their family doctor every year because of shoulder pain.

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Jesse Slade Shantz is part of a team of Rouge Valley Health System doctors working to ensure patients receive timely access to an accurate diagnosis by the right health provider. The surgeons, along with Rouge Valley and the Rouge Valley Health System Foundation, helped create the Shoulder Centre, a one-stop patient-focused centre at the Ajax-Pickering hospital for faster diagnosis and treatment. It treats a wide variety of shoulder injuries, and was created in order to build the capacity to assess and treat all shoulder problems accurately and in a timely manner.

Dr. Shantz explained many times, the fix for the shoulder is easy and available.

"Sometimes the knowledge isn't there to diagnose or provide the treatment," he said.

The surgeons believe smarter communication with primary-care practitioners and trained shoulder experts, as well as collaboration with radiologists, physiotherapists and outside primary care groups, will allow shoulder problems to be treated with as little waste to the patient as possible.

"The vision of this is to create that knowledge in the community, but we're kind of creating a sponge here," said Dr. Shantz.

Implementing this new model of care is also meant to drive system-wide savings of up to \$3 million and enable sustainable funding for specialty shoulder care.

"I think the main emphasis on this shoulder centre will be that wait times will be cut down significantly," said Mr. Cicchelli, who is now a cabinet member of the Shoulder Centre.

Patient Dwayne Kerrigan has benefitted from the hospital's experts. He'd lived with a long-term shoulder injury until he had an accident that "basically tore my shoul-



Jason Liebrechts / Metroland

AJAX -- Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Joel Lobo performed an assessment on Sharon Graves at Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering hospital in Ajax. The hospital is opening a shoulder centre to provide earlier and more accurate diagnosis of patients' shoulder complaints.

der apart" and prompted him to have surgery.

"From a professionalism standpoint, the doctors are unbelievable," he said. "I don't think you could find anybody better really."

The Shoulder Centre staff plans on measuring the effect of changes in wait times, imaging utilization and sharing learnings to apply successful strategies in reforming other areas of specialty care.

"The big thing is we're just trying to change the way things work ... to serve patients and decrease costs," said Dr. Shantz. "Hopefully we can make this a platform for other areas of medicine."

A Shoulder Centre website was recently launched, thanks to a partnership with Search Engine People.

"By having this great competitive web presence, we want current and future patients to be confident that they can receive great care close to home at the Shoulder Centre," said Dr. Stephen Gally, division chief of orthopedics at the Ajax-Pickering hospital.

Visit www.theshouldercentre.ca for more information.



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