

March 30, 2016

## RVH and YMCA launch community cardiac rehab

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka have partnered to ensure cardiac patients from throughout North Simcoe Muskoka now have access to rehabilitation services in the community.

"Today is truly a celebration, not just for RVH and our partners at the YMCA, but for the people who can now receive much-needed cardiovascular rehabilitation in the community," says Janice Skot, president and CEO, RVH. "Once our patients are stable enough to no longer require rehabilitation in our health centre, they can finish what we started in a non-clinical, community setting by participating in the YMCA Healthy Hearts program."

The YMCA Healthy Hearts program, currently running at the Barrie and Innisfil YMCAs but expected to expand to every YMCA in the region, will focus on low-risk patients who do not need to participate in a hospital-based program and patients who have been transitioned from RVH's rehabilitation program. RVH currently provides an intensive 12-week rehabilitation program for moderate to high-risk heart patients.

"These programs are extremely important in reducing both the risk of death and of a subsequent cardiac episode," says Dr. Mohammed Haqqi, cardiologist and cardiac rehabilitation lead, RVH.

Cardiac rehabilitation is a supervised program which includes an individualized exercise plan, nutrition counselling, smoking cessation, and stress management.

"The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka and RVH partnership shares a vision to promote wellness and build healthy communities through access to innovative programs based on the needs of the communities we serve," said Rob Armstrong, CEO, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka. "The YMCA's vision is to inspire people to achieve sustainable wellness. By providing cardiac patients with a smooth transition of care from hospital to community rehabilitation, we are helping them reach that goal."

This partnership is the latest building block in the foundation RVH is developing for a strong advanced cardiac program. Currently, North Simcoe Muskoka is the only region in the province without this service and as a result, most of the area's heart attack patients must travel to centres outside the region for life-saving cardiac care. RVH's advanced cardiac program, slated to open in early-2017, will provide diagnostics and interventions such as angiograms and angioplasty, giving patients access to faster treatment, a shorter hospital stay and less travel time.

"After spending so much time in hospitals following my heart transplant, the transition of my cardiovascular rehabilitation from RVH to the YMCA is helping me feel more like a person again and less like a patient," says Margo Fraser, a heart transplant recipient and one of the first clients enrolled in the Healthy Hearts program. "In fact, I think it is so great that when I'm done my rehab I'm not leaving. I've decided to stay as a volunteer and help others on their journey to recovery."

-30-

Photo Attached/Cutline: Attending the official launch of the Healthy Hearts program, a partnership between Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka are Rob Armstrong (left), CEO, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka; Rose Romita, Councillor, City of Barrie; Margo Fraser, Healthy Hearts client; Joel Seymour, Healthy Hearts specialist, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka and Janice Skot, president and CEO, RVH.

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