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Improved patient experience only a call bell away

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) is piloting enhanced technology and a new protocol for its patient call bell system. In keeping with the health centre's **MY CARE** philosophy in which every patient has a right to expect the safest care and the best possible experience, the objective of the project is to improve the patient experience while at the health centre.

The call bell is a vital communication link during a patient's hospital stay. Based on feedback from patients, it was noted that limitations with the current call bell system were impacting the delivery of care and the overall patient experience. It became evident that changes were required to create a direct and immediate connection between a patient and their nurse.

"At RVH, we are continually looking for new ways to enhance the patient experience and improve patient safety," says Shelley Ditty, vice-president, Planning & Support Services. "One of the most important drivers of a positive patient experience during a hospital stay is the responsiveness of the staff assigned to their care. By adding technology to our current system, we are able to improve call bell responses and give nursing staff a valuable tool to enable them to better prioritize patient care needs."

The current system activates a notice to a master station at the desk, an auditory alarm in the hallway and a visual light over the door. A staff member can then speak to the patient from the inter-professional station via intercom, but it does not allow immediate, direct notification to the patient's primary nurse.

With the improved call bell system, staff carries a hand-held wireless device that rings when a call bell is pushed. The new technology enables staff to receive the call and respond directly to the patient, calling them back on their bedside entertainment unit. By immediately speaking to the patient, staff can assess their needs, urgent or non-urgent, in a timely manner. The direct two-way conversation also helps build rapport between a patient and their caregiver.

The project has launched first on RVH's Cardiac Renal Unit. Since implementation on this unit, there has been a significant decrease in patient concerns regarding call bell response times. The new call bell system and protocol will roll out to the remainder of inpatient units over the next six months.

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About RVH:

RVH is a regional health centre in Barrie, Ontario, located 80 kilometres north of Toronto. As the largest hospital in the region of Simcoe Muskoka, RVH's team of over 350 physicians, 2,500 employees and 1,000 volunteers provides exceptional care and specialty services to almost half a million residents, including cancer care, stroke services, orthopaedics, intensive care, mental health and interventional radiology. RVH is focused on delivering high-quality, safe care that puts patients and their families first. For more information visit www.rvh.on.ca