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RVH reaches milestone in treatment of women's cancer

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) has taken a major step forward to improve access to care for women throughout Central and Northern Ontario by developing comprehensive gynecologic cancer services close to home.

RVH saw its first gynecologic cancer patients last week and the first surgery took place today. Prior to these services being available at RVH women often had to travel long distances for their lifesaving care.

"With 3,200 women across the province requiring gynecologic cancer services every year, the waits can be lengthy – and time is important when you're dealing with cancer. Some women have to travel quite a distance for treatment," says Dr. Jason Dodge, clinical lead, gynecologic cancer services with the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Program (SMRCP). "By developing gynecologic cancer services at RVH we are better positioned to provide care throughout the entire patient journey for cancers originating within a woman's reproductive organs. Once the services are fully implemented this will close the distance gap for women in Central and Northern Ontario."

Improving women's cancer services is one of the health centre's top clinical priorities, so RVH will continue to expand this program as the health centre is developed as a Centre of Excellence for gynecology cancer care. The RVH Foundation is also raising funds to buy specialized equipment used in the diagnosis and treatment of women's cancers.

Last year, approximately 300 women from Central and Northern Ontario had to travel to Toronto for surgery as those highly-specialized services could not be provided in the region. RVH's first gynecologic cancer patient, Katherine Bacik, was thrilled to receive her treatment close to home.

"I have two small children and having to travel to Toronto for treatment for my cervical cancer would have placed a huge burden on my family," says the Alliston mother. "This is such a phenomenal opportunity to be able to have this kind of care close to home. The incredible care I've received at RVH has made me feel like I'm not just a number."

The expansion of services at RVH's Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre, which opened in 2012, means women from throughout Central as well as Northern Ontario, will not have to travel great distances for treatment.

"RVH is changing care for women with cancer in the province and that is exciting," says Dr. Dodge.

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