

Talk it up Victoria



Renfrew Victoria Hospital

Your Community Healthcare Centre

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RVH leads the way in providing cancer care close to home

Help, hope and home – those are the three special ingredients Renfrew Victoria Hospital can offer people with cancer.

“If you are a cancer patient, the last thing you need to add to your day is a three-hour round trip to the city,” comments Hospital Chair Kent Tubman. “It makes sense to offer these services right here in Renfrew so people throughout the county can be treated close to home in a comfortable, caring environment.”

Since 1993, RVH has been providing specialized cancer services to the people of this area. Through those 12 years, knowledge and treatment options have grown at an astounding rate, both in the oncology field in general and within RVH.

“It has been a source of great pride and inspiration to watch this program evolve from a concept to a service that is truly meeting the needs of Renfrew County oncology patients,” says RVH CEO Randy Penney.

The hospital has taken a leadership role in community cancer care since it treated the first four patients at its inaugural clinic in May 1993. When the specialists arrived from the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre that day, they were joining Renfrew in a bold new venture – their first community satellite unit.

By that fall, Renfrew doctors and nurses were trained and ready to provide chemotherapy treatments. There has been no looking back since, as the program has grown to include more intensive levels of chemotherapy covering every treatment offered at the Ottawa centre other than radiation.

“We have a hospital without walls approach,” says RN Cindy McLennan, head of oncology nursing at RVH.

She explains that up-to-date patient records are always available in both Ottawa and Renfrew and information can be instantaneously shared about changes to medications or new treatment options.

Oncologists specializing in both chemotherapy and radiation therapy continue to host regular clinics at RVH. The local doctors who work with them are developing a specialized bank of knowledge that is put to use on a daily basis.

“They’re not just seeing follow-up patients, they’re seeing newly-diagnosed cancer patients,” McLennan comments.

“We’re actually making acute oncology decisions in the community. That’s something pretty special.”

“The hospital’s been good to put the funds into the program,” says Dr. Stephanie Langlois, who established her family practice in Renfrew after working in radiation oncology in Ottawa for nine years. “I’m a big proponent of doing what you can locally,” she adds. “It is so much easier for the patients.”

“It’s a very valuable program for the local people,” agrees Dr. Vince Young, one of the oncologists from the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre.

“They feel a huge degree of comfort being treated in their own community.”

His fellow oncologist, Dr. Olu Agboola says that comfort is well-founded.

“It’s a great team here,” he says. “That’s the beauty of the community clinics – we get to know each other and work as a team.”



Dr. Vince Young of the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre, left, offers a friendly greeting to Jacqueline Demers of Pembroke. Above, Volunteer Karen Corbin checks the weight of patient Andrew Kelly.

From vision to action

Renfrew's development of a comprehensive local cancer program grew out of an analysis of the ongoing work at RVH.

The study clearly showed that much of the hospital's care was cancer-related, encompassing inpatient surgery, mammography, pharmacy, nursing, general x-ray, ultrasound, laboratory and other ambulatory care work.

"We decided that these services needed to be rolled up into one program and, to provide the best care possible, we needed to be linked to the cancer centre in Ottawa," recalls CEO Randy Penney.

From the beginning, RVH was determined that the program would focus on developing the skill sets of local health care workers, including family physicians in the Renfrew area.

When Renfrew presented its concept to the administration of the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre, a new partnership in health care was born.

"It's one thing to have a vision for a program," says Penney. "It is another to have a partner, in this case the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre, working with us to ensure that program's success."

"The services we provide to people with cancer from throughout Renfrew County are only available because of their faith in us and their ongoing support for us."

"Renfrew is definitely a model in the delivery of regional cancer care," says Cathy De Grasse, senior advisor for regional cancer programs with the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre.

"They've been very innovative in how they've developed that program," she adds. "We certainly look forward to working with Renfrew Victoria along with other regional partners to further develop regional cancer programs, and we very much value the leadership they've provided to date."

From experience...

Tips to make the cancer journey easier

We asked RVH oncology patients to share their advice for people facing a cancer diagnosis:

- "Keep doing all the things that you always did", says Rudy Cooper. He explains that exercise and maintaining a positive outlook helped him through the early days.
- "Have someone attend your appointments with you", says Rosemarie Enright. She knows how overwhelming all the information can be, and says a listening partner will provide invaluable details and back-up information.

Others offered a number of practical tips to cope with the day-to-day realities of cancer treatment:

- Drink milk with Tamoxifen to minimize the side effects
- Tamoxifen and other therapies can bring on hot flashes – wear loose, cotton clothing and light colours
- Understand that emotional responses can be caused by medication. If you cry unexpectedly or have trouble sleeping, blame it on the medicine, not on yourself. You don't need to take on any extra guilt.
- Prepare for hair loss if you need chemotherapy: Wash your hair in lukewarm water, it will have a gentler effect than hot water. Begin wearing a wig before you need to, you'll feel more comfortable as time goes on.

Tackling the critical factor of time

Anyone facing a potential diagnosis of cancer will tell you that time is their first concern.

"It's the waiting that really stresses the patient," comments Phil Crozier, lead hand in the RVH diagnostic imaging department.

"The shorter that wait, the better," he adds. "Even if the results are positive, there's a comfort in knowing where they go from here."

Dr. Lance Miller agrees. As Renfrew's surgeon, he's committed to minimizing patients' waits for treatment.

"Any time I'm called by any family doctor, if they say it's breast cancer or bowel cancer, I'll do everything possible to see the patient within 24 to 48 hours," he says, noting that in larger centres, patients often wait weeks for surgical consults.

RVH's rapid response continues once patients are out of the operating room.

"They literally can be receiving chemo within eight weeks of their surgery," says Dr. Art Dick, pointing out that Renfrew has been recognized in the past as the best hospital in the country in taking patients quickly from diagnosis to treatment.

Adding to the RVH team

Karen Corbin knows exactly what Renfrew Victoria Hospital means when it talks about "patient-centred care".

One of the most difficult things for her to face as a cancer patient was the constant bloodwork. Corbin hates needles.

RVH Lab Technologist Laurene Guest was quick to pick up on Corbin's distress and did everything she could to improve the situation.

"She made a point of doing my bloodwork before the lab even opened, when nobody else was there," Corbin recalls.

"You would never get that in the city!"

Guest, who has since passed away, is fondly remembered by many patients who used the RVH lab. Corbin says she was exceptional, but adds that many other staff in the hospital share Guest's spirit and compassion.

"They listen when you have something to say. You get to know them and they get to know you," she says. "There are so many little things that you don't even think about."

That's why Corbin, who works full-time, decided to make room in her schedule to volunteer once a month at the RVH oncology clinic.

From the patients' perspective

Rosemarie Enright was diagnosed with breast cancer six years ago, and she still recalls her relief when the RVH team took quick action.

"I didn't have long to worry," she says, explaining that within a week of her mammogram she had the necessary surgery to remove the lump she had found as well as some surrounding nodes.

Karen Cockwell sits beside Enright in the RVH waiting room as she tells her story, and nods in sympathetic agreement.

"They were very quick to pick up on things," she says of the staff at RVH, who scheduled her biopsy within two days.

Cockwell had to travel to Ottawa for the radiation treatments she required, but the rest of her care, including the check-ups she now has every three months, has been provided in Renfrew.

"They are awfully good to me," she says, noting that she finds great comfort in the familiar faces and friendly smiles she sees at RVH.

Karen Cockwell and Rosemarie Enright



“They’re a true team and they really work well together...”

Barbara Austin doesn't think of it as going to an oncology unit for treatment. For her, it's more like going to a spa.

"They cover you with a blanket if you want... They bring you a pillow... It's wonderful," she says. "Every time they pass you, they give you a smile and stop to see how you're doing."

"If you want personal care, that's where you go," she says of her regular trips from her home in Petawawa to Renfrew.

"It's been a good experience in my time of darkness."

Austin has been through many difficult days since her cancer diagnosis a little over a year ago.

"My body did fine, but my heart was totally broken," she says, adding that, in Renfrew, the team works hard to fix broken hearts while they're treating cancer.

Austin describes it as a big family around her providing for her needs.

"It's like Christmas," she says, noting that she has been given a homemade lap blanket and hand-knit socks to keep her cozy.

"I was in my cocoon every time I went there," agrees Chris Maheral of Renfrew. "I was confident that I was getting the treatment I needed from people who cared."

Maheral loves the fact that her monthly treatments are only a 10-minute drive from home.

In fact, 10 is a number that comes up a lot when she talks about receiving chemotherapy at RVH.

"If I had to rate it on a scale of one to 10," she says, "Renfrew Victoria would get a 10... plus!"

Robert Syme of Deep River is in the unique position of being referred from Toronto to Renfrew for his cancer care.

He was living in the city and his wife was living in Deep River when he was diagnosed with colon cancer. His doctor advised him to settle in the Ottawa Valley.

Since August of 2002, Syme has received all of his chemotherapy treatments and most of his overall cancer care in Renfrew under the direction of Dr. Vince Young.

"They've kept me alive and I'm grateful for the professional care I've received," he says.

"They're a true team and they really work well together," he adds, mentioning the care he has received from the nurses and from supporting departments such as the lab and pharmacy.

"It's great to have a hospital like the Renfrew Victoria here in the Ottawa Valley," concludes Syme.

“You’re more than a number here and you’re more than a cancer patient here...”



It's Rudy Cooper's turn to nod in agreement.

Rudy had surgery at RVH and had to go to Ottawa for radiation treatment, but was relieved to receive his chemotherapy in Renfrew.

"You're more than a number here and you're more than a cancer patient here," the Griffith resident says.

"I feel at home," he adds. "It just knocks me over when somebody knows my name after not seeing me for three months. I'm really impressed with the staff at this place."

Rudy Cooper

The characteristics of exceptional community cancer care

Renfrew Victoria Hospital, together with its doctors and staff, has made considerable investments of time, money and energy to provide outstanding cancer care in our community.

Here are just a few of the key aspects of our care:

Early detection

- state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging including x-rays, ultrasound and fluoroscopy
- the Ontario Breast Screening Program
- colonoscopies and other early detection techniques
- ambulatory urology clinic

Care

- local doctors John Matosh, Art Dick and Stephanie Langlois work side by side in the RVH clinic with cancer specialists from Ottawa
- care in our clinic begins immediately following diagnosis, and continues through post-treatment follow-up appointments

Treatment

- all three levels of chemotherapy are offered at RVH
- RVH nurses are trained to insert peripherally inserted central catheters, which reduce the needlesticks for patients
- secure specialized computer links provide instant and complete information to all caregivers

Support

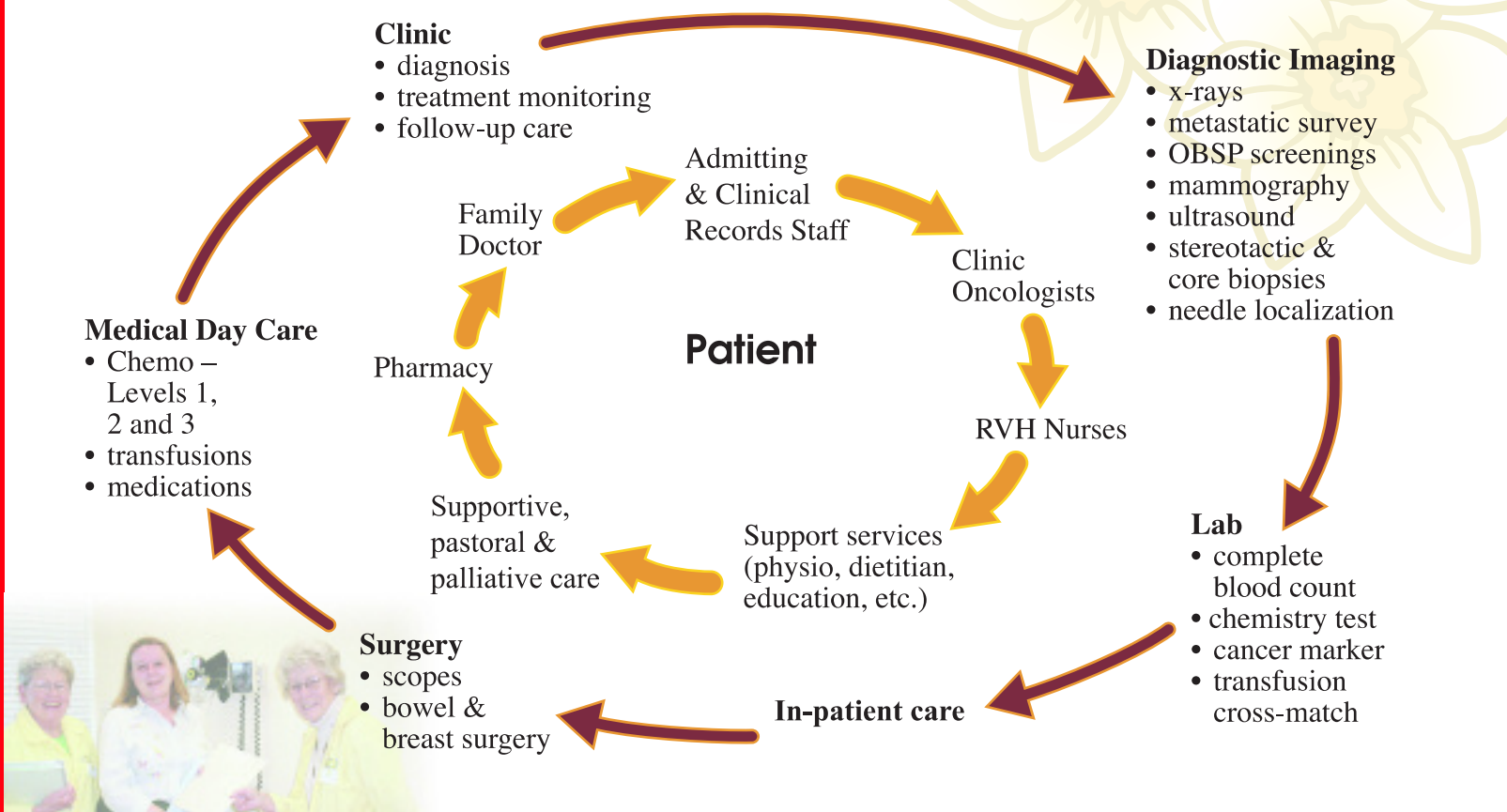
- Renfrew's palliative care committee has developed models of care that have been adopted throughout the country
- currently, a Renfrew team is preparing to open the first rural hospice in eastern Ontario in 2007
- Renfrew is the smallest community in Canada to offer the Look Good Feel Better program for cancer patients
- a host of volunteers support our services – donating comfort items, funds and time to complete our circle of care.



Renfrew's Dr. Art Dick with Dr. Olu Agboola of the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre.

The circle of care

Cancer care involves virtually every member of the RVH team – from diagnostics such as x-rays, mammograms and ultrasound to surgery, the lab, pharmacy and information technology staff. Here is how a typical patient will make use of our hospital services:



Talk it up Victoria - the Renfrew Victoria Hospital newsletter

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News from the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation

A time to say thank you

As we head into the final days of 2005, and all of the festivities they involve, the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation would like to express our sincere gratitude for all of the support we have received in the past year.

You have celebrated with us in a variety of ways. You have given us your time, your energy and your financial donations.

Every contribution you make allows us to focus on our fundamental role – to provide our community with the best possible health care. We're pleased to acknowledge some of our most recent gifts in the photos on this page.

Please visit our RVH Foundation display in the hospital's main hall, where we pay tribute to all of our supporters.

Thank you for being such a caring, giving community! We wish you the best of the season, and a happy, healthy new year.



The Renfrew Rotary Club has completed its \$50,000 pledge for the Equip for Care Campaign. Members of the club celebrated as they presented an \$8,000 cheque to RVH's Vice-President of Finance, Paul Chatelain, and Foundation Director Barbara Symington.



Tinker's Billiards and Bar recently hosted an auction to raise funds for the RVH oncology program. Manager Marcia Hewitt and Karaoke Host Georgie-Ann Evans presented a cheque for \$300 to Barbara Symington.



The new Cyclone Sports Bar at the Best Western Renfrew Inn combined its grand opening with a fund-raising event for RVH. From left are RVH Foundation member Garry Wilson, Shane Maloof of the Best Western, Lorna Finner of the foundation, Maryena Keindel of Cyclone Sports Bar, and Julia Boudreau of RVH.



TD Canada Trust recently contributed over \$400 to the physician recruitment campaign. On hand for the presentation were Reyna Wytenburg and Paul Rowan of TD Canada Trust, Physician Recruiter Kathy Chretien, and RVH's Julia Boudreau, Garry Wilson and Randy Penney.



The Royal Bank provides \$500 grants to support its retirees' volunteer initiatives. Kevin Bossey, manager of small business services, and Janet Brush present a cheque to Chrissy McNaughton, Barbara Symington and Doris Handford of the RVH auxiliary in honour of Barbara's volunteer commitment.

Tree of Lights reflects Renfrew's community spirit

The Tree of Lights campaign, the biggest fund-raiser of the year for the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation, is currently underway.

As this issue of Talk It Up Victoria goes to press, final preparations are being made for the community celebration at Low Square, to take place the evening of Friday, December 16.

The carol singing, hot apple cider, and the brightly lit tree are our way of celebrating the community spirit that helps make us shine all year long. Each bulb on that tree reflects a donation made to our campaign.

This year's funds will be used to assist in the purchase of a portable x-ray machine for the RVH emergency department.

More than 30,000 people come under the care of our emergency staff each year. Time is of the essence when a small community hospital is treating so many people and making critical medical decisions. A portable x-ray machine can save precious minutes in post-trauma treatment by allowing x-rays to be taken right in the emergency room while the triage team is working with the patient.

Portability means that this x-ray machine serves other areas of our hospital too. It is frequently used in the special care unit, the operating room and the obstetric department.

Please consider how your contribution to our fifteenth annual Tree of Lights campaign can make a difference.

Volunteers provide two days of labour to mail out the Foundation's Christmas card inviting supporters to participate in the annual Tree of Lights campaign.

Please consider making a contribution

There are a number of ways that you can make a donation to the Renfrew Victoria Hospital Foundation's annual Tree of Lights campaign. Cheques can be dropped off at the "Victoria Tree of Lights" donation boxes at all financial institutions in Renfrew or at the RVH Foundation office at the hospital.

This year, we are pleased to offer the convenience of on-line donations. Please visit our new website at www.rvhfoundation.com and fill out the secure "Donate Now" form.

You can also mail your donation to: RVH Foundation, 499 Raglan St. N., Renfrew, Ontario K7V 1P6.



Capturing the spirit in an image

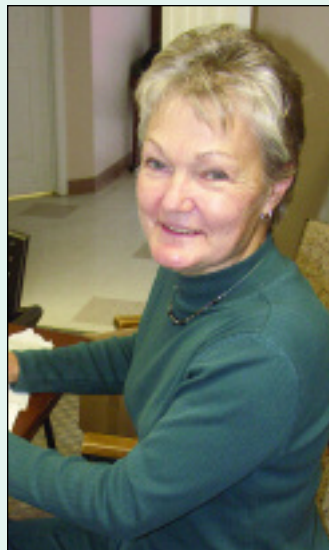
Local artist Ann Marie Crozier has produced a beautiful, glimmering image of Renfrew's Low Square in full seasonal glow.

We're proud of the festive addition of our Tree of Lights to our downtown core, and we're especially pleased that Ann Marie has captured it in her art.

Her painting graces the RVH Foundation Christmas card this year, and we're sure it will become a keepsake in many local homes.

For Ann Marie, the contribution marks a long-term connection with RVH – the hospital where she was born, and where her family has received care over the years. As a diabetic, Ann Marie knows the value of good health care.

"I am honoured to have had my art chosen for this campaign," she says. "Growing up in Renfrew and raising a family here, I really appreciate having such an outstanding local hospital and all of the services it provides."



Ann Marie began painting in 1992, and her love of art has blossomed into a full-time hobby. Her works are often displayed in Renfrew Art Guild exhibitions.

She and her husband, Ross, operate a dairy farm in the Admaston/Bromley area.



Ann Marie Crozier, left, created the beautiful image of Low Square that adorns this year's RVH Foundation Christmas card.