

Foothills Family Medical Centre Implements Innovative Use of iPhones

We've always known how lucky we are to have the Foothills Family Medical Centre, the Oilfields Hospital, FREMS and Home Care in our midst.

Stop and think for a moment, have you ever had the occasion to go to emergency and find you have forgotten to take your medications with you? Has the Doctor asked what prescription drugs you're currently taking - only to have you draw a blank and say "I think they start with 'apo'?" After all isn't this the age of technology? Isn't that a computer on the desk? Didn't your doctor at the clinic put your information in the computer? You think: why can't he just look it up?

On the other hand, consider this scenario. There has been an accident, the ambulance arrives (in record time), and you feel relief. Then the questions start coming - are you taking any meds, do you have any medical conditions, how are you feeling, where does it hurt, what happened....? Stressed, worried, confused, semi-conscious perhaps even unconscious... how can you help the Paramedics to do their job?

Now think about this - with the aid of secure technology, the Doctor or the Paramedics pick up an iPhone and access some vital information about you from your medical records at the Foothills Family Medical Centre. Think this might help the Doctor treat you or the Paramedics save your life?

What we haven't known or appreciated is the behind the scenes work that this group of caring Doctors have been doing on our behalf.

Spearheaded by Dr. Tim Dowdall, the Calgary Rural Primary Care Network (PCN) has conducted a pilot project using iPhones and unique software developed by Coalesce, to provide secure access to patient data by physicians and other health providers outside of the health facilities, since last April.

Dowdall said that the project started from the realization that as a large clinic there is a lot of useful informa-

tion that could be shared.

The iPhones have been modified to increase security of patient data with protocols that exceed those of banking machines.

The iPhones are linked via the software program to allow all the doctors at the Foothills Family Medical Centre, two Paramedics and four Home Care Nurses to pull information from the electronic medical records in the Foothills Family Medical Centre to the point-of-care.

This allows first responders, like Theresa Berry and her partner, Mike Anderson, Paramedics with FREMS to find out about a patient's past medical history often before they arrive at the scene. This in turn gives them a better idea of what they will be dealing with and allows them to be more prepared. Berry says, "The iPhone provides better excellence in patient care by providing better access to public, patient information." She also says FREMS are 'trend-setters' as this is likely the only program like this in Canada. Berry also stressed the iPhones are very user friendly, in read-only format and very secure. Each patient's doctor has the ability to restrict which information is available and any information accessed is totally monitored by the patient's own doctor.

Dr. Dowdall said that Primary Care Networks, like the Calgary Rural PCN, are limited only by the doctors' imaginations. PCNs fund projects that directly benefit patients in that PCNs' area.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are a made-in-Alberta approach to improve the delivery of primary care. A Primary Care

Network is formed when a group of physicians and Alberta Health Services agree to work together to provide enhanced primary care services. In addition to physicians, other health professionals are key partners in delivering PCN services. Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health Services are partners in the development of Primary Care Networks.

"Response to date from all physicians involved in the iPhone pilot project has been positive", says Dowdall. What makes the technology unique is that physicians can input into the software program the level of patient information that other health providers, like EMTs and Home Care nurses, require to do their jobs while restricting access to any other information. This collaboration represents a significant step forward in having all health professionals working as a team to provide better health care to patients in Alberta.

Dowdall said he has used the iPhone on several occasions when visiting patients at the High Country Lodge. "It allows me to access their medications and records and saves them having to come to the clinic, which in many instances is difficult for them."

So next time you forget your meds or have to call an ambulance, rest assured that as well as being in extremely good hands, you know that those hands now have the ability to access all the information they need to perform their jobs, thanks to our caring team of health care professionals here in the valley.

Theresa Berry EMT-P
Staff Development Officer
Foothills Regional Emergency
Medical Services

