Psychiatry team eases patients through renovation

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mall changes can make a huge difference. That’s what the team in the Psychiatry Department discovered after a redesigned nurses’ station grew by only a few extra square feet, but resulted in a major improvement for the staff who regularly meet there. The changes this past summer were part of an upgrade in the short-term care area of 4 East, known as the Transitory Treatment Unit, whose patient areas benefited from an additional private room, fresh paint and better ventilation.

The nurses’ station now offers more seating and increased storage for administrative purposes and for medications. “The room is much fresher and more pleasant,” says Louise De Bellefeuille, Head Nurse in Psychiatry. “It’s less cramped and cluttered, and nurses now also have better access to computers.”

Frequent teaching rounds are held in the area, as staff gather with nursing and social work students, explains Eva Gardos, a Registered Nurse with over 20 years’ experience in the Unit. “We’re a very multidisciplinary unit, with teams that include psychologists, psychiatrists, residents, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists. Before, when we held our meetings with students, we were piled on top of one another. Now we’re much more comfortable and, most importantly, everyone fits!”

Ms. Gardos adds that the space is more welcoming for patients and their families, who use the area for private, ongoing therapy sessions by Psychiatry staff.

While the renovations were under way, patients were transferred elsewhere in the hospital, a move that “was handled remarkably well and sensitively by staff, who really are to be applauded,” says Valerie Frunchak, JGH Nursing Director for Psychiatry.

During the renovations, the department had to operate on two floors, with Psychiatry staff helping patients to adjust to the transition. “We met daily to discuss how to maintain a sense of normalcy and stability through our therapeutic programs,” recalls Gloria Aronoff, an Occupational Therapist in Psychiatry. “This is especially important when patients are displaced from their familiar environment, so we worked hard as a team to minimize the disruption. This is where we excel: we care for the patient, because it’s mainly the people, and not just the place, that make the difference.”

A fond farewell to Dr. Hartley Stern
Departing CEO brought the JGH to new heights

Although a few sighs could be heard among staff about the impending departure of Dr. Hartley Stern, the mood was decidedly festive on August 29, as employees from across the hospital gathered to say goodbye to the outgoing Executive Director. Many took the opportunity to thank him for dedicating more than five years to implementing improvements that will continue to benefit patients and personnel for years to come.

Among the well-wishers was JGH President Rick Dubrovsky, who told Dr. Stern: “On behalf of all the staff that you have had the pleasure of working with, and the community you served with such excellence, we wish you a fond farewell and good luck in the next phase of your career.”

Right from the outset, Dr. Stern expressed his commitment to promoting cleanliness, quality and safety, said Director of Nursing Johanne Boileau. “All of his accomplishments are related to what he had said he would do. Under his leadership, we built many partnerships to improve access for patients and we launched quality projects to increase transparency. Through Dr. Stern’s support for these and many other initiatives, the JGH achieved Exemplary Status in our latest Accreditation. But we will also remember his great qualities as a leader: nurses appreciate that he is approachable and warm, and that he respects and listens to people.”

Toward the end of the event, the tables were turned so that Dr. Stern could offer thanks of his own. He said he had worked in three cities, three hospitals, three universities and three different cultures, but the JGH was “the best hospital” he’d seen anywhere: “Our Board, our Foundation and our community support us because they believe in this institution, in our values. And what are those values? Care for all. We are filled with the most aged, complicated patients who receive the best possible care because of the great leadership you bring, you who are here today.”

Dr. Stern named many areas that had developed, expanded or innovated during his term, including:

- approval for Pavilion K and substantial progress in construction, with the new Emergency Department scheduled to open in February
- renovations and upgrades in Cardiology, Geriatrics, Radiology and the Centre for Child Development and Mental Health

- implementation of various projects and the installation of equipment and linked processes—e.g., PACS, Chartmaxx, wireless
- the Lady Davis Institute has exceeded the national average for success with peer-reviewed funding agencies, reinforcing the hospital’s reputation as one of Canada’s leading research hospitals
- safety improvements by Nursing in areas such as post-surgical thrombosis care and the Department of Medicine
- finding ways for mental health professionals to communicate with and serve a culture of 90 languages in vicinity of the hospital
- launch of the Herzl CRIU Walk-in Centre, along with the Herzl model of multidisciplinary teams
- implementation of Transformational Change to heighten efficiency, eliminate duplication and cut waste, so that saved funds can be used for patient care
- safety improvements in the Emergency Department through teamwork among Emergency personnel, Internal Medicine and Surgery

“You are our most valuable asset,” Dr. Stern told his audience. “All of you get up in the morning, no matter where you work in the hospital, thinking, ‘How can I do this better, how can I make a patient’s life better?’ We play our part by giving you the tools to flourish—that’s why we’re among top 100 employers in Montreal, because we care about you. It has been a great honour.”