

Campaign helps patients ‘feel better faster’ Promotes health care options to ease wait times in emergency

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Campaign helps patients ‘feel better faster’. Dr. Michael Kates, chief of family medicine at Trillium and director of the Family Medicine Teaching Unit, and Dr. Laurence Biro, family medicine resident, stand in one of the patient rooms at the Mississauga teaching unit location. *Staff photo/ANICE WONG*

Trillium Health Centre is urging patients to Feel Better Faster.

The community awareness campaign promotes options to access health care intended to reduce wait times for non-emergent patients in hospital emergency departments.

Last year, one-third of the nearly 306,000 visits to emergency departments in Mississauga and Halton were people with injuries or illnesses who could have gone elsewhere, reported the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), which sponsored the Feel Better Faster initiative.

“Reducing emergency wait times is an important goal for hospitals in the Mississauga-Halton area and across the province,” Bill MacLeod, Mississauga Halton LHIN CEO said in a statement. “We are involving a wide range of health care providers because we feel it is our responsibility to inform people in our communities about how, when and where to find the help they need.”

Trillium, The Credit Valley Hospital, Halton Health care Services and the Mississauga Halton Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) also benefit from the initiative.

Etobicoke and Mississauga residents can gain information about local health care services, including family doctors, pharmacies, mental health services, urgent care services, walk-in/after-

hours clinics and CCAC services like home-care, community and long-term care services via the campaign.

Visit www.feelbetterfaster.ca to learn more.

In 2009-10, Trillium saw 79,407 emergency visits to its Mississauga hospital, and 51,525 visits to its Urgent Care Centre at its West Toronto (Etobicoke) site on Sherway Drive.

“Emergency departments are designed to treat serious and life-threatening illnesses and injuries and these always take priority,” Janet Davidson, O.C., president and CEO of Trillium Health Centre said in a statement. “So when people come to us with non-emergent ailments, they often find themselves waiting for extended periods of time in the emergency department, when in fact, they likely could have been seen by another health care provider within a shorter period of time elsewhere in the community.”

In 2008-09, of those who sought care for non-emergent illnesses and injuries in Mississauga and Halton emergency departments, nearly 24 per cent were parents with young children, while 11 per cent were seniors and their caregivers.

Last July, the Trillium-Summerville Family Medicine Teaching Unit opened at 101 Queensway West in Mississauga, directly across the street from Trillium’s Mississauga Hospital. It is accepting new patients.

The collaborative model pairs patients with one of four resident doctors, who are supervised by one of four doctors. Nurse-practitioners, nurses, a pharmacist, dietitian and social worker are also on staff. This July, an additional six residents will join the unit. Since it opened, about 500 Etobicoke residents became patients.

“One of our objectives is to take on orphan patients whose doctor has retired, moved on, or who request a change for other reasons,” Dr. Michael Kates, director of the Trillium-Summerville Family Medicine Teaching Unit, said in an interview. “The reality is patients are having difficulties finding physicians still. It’s an aging community and an under-served area. The demand for family physicians is there.”

Kates is chief of family practice at Trillium Health Centre. Four resident doctors work at the teaching unit, supervised by Kates and his colleagues, program director Dr. Bashir Tazkarji, Dr. Rosy Zafar and Dr. Ruby Alvi.

“When a patient wants to sign up with our teaching unit, one of our jobs is to educate them about how we work, tell them our residents are new physicians, but they’re great guys and good doctors. They’re a bit green, but we train them to get comfortable, to acclimatize to the community,” Kates said.

The unit is affiliated with the University of Toronto’s Department of Family and Community Medicine.

Collaboration is key to the teaching unit model, Kates said. “It’s all about collaboration. As a team, we can approach each other. Collaborative care theoretically allows you to do more and do a better job.”

In 2012, the teaching unit expects to reach its full complement of 18 family medicine residents who will provide care to 8,500 patients. A family physician with a caseload of 1,700 patients, Kates began his career 25 years ago at the then-Queensway hospital.

He met his first patients in the former Queensway's emergency department.

Kates advocates the Feel Better Faster message to help patients access the right care in the right place at the right time.

“For patients, the Feel Better Faster campaign is condensed into a nice pamphlet that gives them some (health care) options. For more minor illnesses, going to the emergency is not the way to go. Go to your family doctor first. You're going to get care when you get (to emergency), but there are longer waits and you're exposed to whatever bugs are there.”