

Recently, Windsor Regional Hospital underwent a significant redesign of its department of medicine after an in-depth review of the concepts and strategies of its team.

Under the new leadership of Theresa Morris, Windsor Regional Hospital's director of medicine, "we examined the medicine units and found that we had a great lack of standardization," she explains. "There were different forms, different processes... it became clear that things were more unit-specific than medicine-specific." In addition the varied layouts of each unit, there were also great differences in patient care from one unit to the next.

"So we essentially blew up the medicine program and redesigned it, with the goal that everything we were going to do had to be centered on the patient."

This project was spearheaded by Morris and led by the front line nursing staff from the medicine and emergency departments. The group of 100 staff members met weekly for three months. "Our redesign was all about the patient journey," says Morris, "including pre-admission, admission, care, treatment and discharge."

With an aim to improve patient safety, infection control, patient satisfaction and care, the group also wanted to be able to make changes to noise levels and errors in the administration of medication due to distraction. They also wanted to be able to reduce patient anxiety, and focused on consistent use of whiteboards to communicate between care providers, patients and family members.

"We were motivated by a goal to do what we could do with what we had in an effort to be fiscally responsible," says Morris, "but to also always ask ourselves, 'In the end, is this the best for the patient?'"

Because the front line staff – including nursing staff, social workers, case managers - led the process, the goal to redesign the entire medicine program to improve patient care processes, patient flow and model of care was an outstanding success. Thanks to the hard work of this efficient, highly knowledgeable and passionate team, the redesign included a number of major initiatives that ensured the superior care and satisfaction of every single patient. These initiatives included a standard process for patient care rounds, the standardization of comfort rounds to reduce patient falls, changes to the physical environment of nursing units (which included decentralized nursing stations, safe and quiet medication rooms, bedside chart locations, and new sinks to improve infection control processes), and the development of the "We Care Framework," which was designed to guide patient interactions and the improvement of emotional support for the patient.

"This has certainly smoothed the process and made the patient journey so much better," says Morris. "And it's been a significant, positive change for the staff as well. There were 100 nurses involved with this change. They feel safer, they feel like their work flow is better. Happy staff means happy patients."

"This was a major project, and it has definitely improved all of us on a personal level and as an entire group."

Recently, the Medicine Redesign Team was able to share their success with the province by presenting posters at the University of Windsor 4th Biennial Nursing Conference, the OHA in Toronto and at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement National Forum in Orlando, Florida. They represented Windsor Regional Hospital's ground-breaking processes in patient safety and quality of care.

The group continues to meet monthly, building a program focused on providing outstanding care.