

PRH Surgical Team Is Making Strides As Part Of Provincial Opioid Reduction Initiative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PEMBROKE – As part of a province-wide opioid reduction initiative, the Pembroke Regional Hospital's Surgical team prescribed nearly 10,000 less pills to patients over a one year period that ended in April 2020, representing a 20% decrease in opioid prescriptions.

PRH is one of 47 hospitals in Ontario who took part in the *Cut the Count* campaign as a member of the Ontario Surgical Quality Improvement Network supported by Health Quality Ontario. These hospitals are responsible for almost 80% of the surgical operations that take place in the province annually.

Prescribing fewer opioids to surgical patients at discharge, while helping patients manage their pain effectively in other ways was the campaign aim so that fewer opioids would end up being improperly disposed and to help reduce addiction and overdose rates in the community.

“As many patients require drugs to help deal with pain as they recover from a procedure, opioids have traditionally been the go-to class of medications for controlling pain after surgery,” said Michelle Godsell, Surgical program Manager at PRH.

Physician lead Dr. Amanda Williamson explained that the initiative was a collaborative effort among the surgeon team.

“Previously there was no consistency in prescribing practices with each surgeon having their own way of doing it. As a result of this campaign, the prescribing practice has become standardized,” Dr. Williamson said.

She noted that education was a huge part of the campaign – not only education for nurses and physicians, but also for patients.

“Patients should expect to have pain after a surgical procedure. Our goal is to ensure their pain is tolerable or manageable – not eliminated altogether. Some of the opioid reduction strategies we implemented were alternative methods for pain control that allow patients to resume activities of daily living,” Dr. Williamson said, adding that this could be through the use of non-narcotic anti-inflammatory medication, acetaminophen, and other non-pharmaceutical options such as the use of heat and ice.

In addition to developing common prescriptions used by the surgeon group, they were also recognized for their reduction initiatives which included revised patient education sheets, changes in pre and post-operative teaching, and the use of more regional techniques for anaesthesia that result in less pain.

“Patient education was also standardized. Previous to the initiative, patients were receiving pain management education 40% of the time. They now receive it 97% of the time and patients receive a call 30 days post-op to assess the initiative implementation and get feedback on the patient experience,” Dr. Williamson said.

Each of these improvements have not only resulted in a better outcome for the patients, but also the reality is we are seeing less opioids in circulation which is a huge step in the right direction, she said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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