

Adoption Of New Electronic Referral System Will Improve The Efficiency Of Diagnostic Imaging Bookings At Pembroke Regional Hospital

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PEMBROKE – The Pembroke Regional Hospital's Diagnostic Imaging department has joined more than 400 clinicians in the Champlain region who are now using a popular, new, electronic referral system to send, receive and book appointments for their patients.

The *Ocean eReferral Network* is compatible with electronic medical records and has a variety of features which make it easy for health care providers to use.

“By joining the provincial eReferral initiative, the Pembroke Regional Hospital's DI department has introduced a simpler process for community clinicians requesting imaging services for their patients. This will also improve the quality and appropriateness of the requisitions, which in turn minimizes unnecessary delays for the scheduling of services for PRH's patients,” said Amir Afkham, Digital Health Program Lead for the Champlain region.

“This is also an important step towards a broader strategy of transitioning away from paper/fax, and improving communications between providers and patients,” Mr. Afkham said.

Pembroke Regional Hospital's shift to use of the *Ocean eReferral Network* is part of a larger provincial eServices initiative funded by the Ministry of Health and will change the way health care referrals are sent and managed while replacing traditional fax-and-paper systems.

“We are always looking for ways to collaborate with our regional and provincial partners to enhance care and to do more in a digital format,” said Diagnostic Imaging Director Jim Lumsden, noting that, both regionally and across the province, there is a lot of work being done with regards to computerized medical records and electronic requisitions.

Mr. Lumsden explained that, traditionally, physical paper requisitions that weren't specific to any modality, had to be faxed in to the department by physicians. As a result, this method presented opportunities for errors and breach of privacy by misdialing a fax number. Each incomplete referral or misdirected document meant delays in bookings.

With standardized referral forms for each modality, DI Clerk Lucia Dellapenta said the new system makes it easier for clinicians to complete requisitions leaving little to no room for error or misinterpretation of what is contained on the form.

Since launching the new system in early July, she said the transition has been relatively seamless and there has been lots of positive feedback to date. She added that all clerks now receive notification when there's a new referral and having both the modality and referring physician specified enables the referral to become a booking in a much more timely manner.

PRH Chief of Hospitalist Medicine Dr. Declan Rowan who is also a family physician with the Petawawa Centennial Family Health Centre calls the new system a really positive improvement that is much safer and efficient than traditional referral methods. “It’s a real win in every way. I can now securely refer for a wide range of services directly from a patient chart and it prompts me to order the best evidence-based exam based on symptoms.”

And Sabine Mersmann, Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services / Partnerships and Integration said because the new system interfaces well with the hospital’s IT infrastructure, it lays the groundwork for expansion into other areas of service that PRH provides.

“This is a technological step forward for our organization and something that benefits all end users. Our patients gain faster access to care, our region’s physicians have gained an easier method for making referrals and our specialists receive more appropriate, comprehensive referrals without chance for delay,” Ms. Mersmann said.

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