

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dramatic Reductions in Wait Times for Hip and Knee Replacements

August 11, 2009 (Toronto, ON) – Patients can expect to wait an average of about eight weeks for a total joint replacement procedure at Sunnybrook. This is down from an average of 30-40 weeks a few short years ago.

This reduction in wait time at Sunnybrook's Holland Orthopaedic and Arthritic Centre is a result of participation in the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's Wait Time Strategy. The Holland Centre has created a new model of care that is being implemented across the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network.

At the core of this success is the ability to provide streamlined access for patients and referring physicians through a team-based patient care model that includes an expanded role for specially trained physiotherapists and comprehensive patient assessment and education.

"Before I was referred to the Holland Centre, I was just waiting and suffering with terrible arthritis," says Veena Dutta, who had knee replacement surgery at Sunnybrook in March 2009. "In less than a month after my family doctor faxed in the referral, I had my knee replaced and couldn't be happier. Patients do not have the patience to endure long waits so I hope that others can benefit like I did."

Sunnybrook's Holland Centre is one of six hospitals in the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network that is working to improve access to care and reduce wait times for hip and knee replacement surgery. In a recent update from the Ontario Wait Times Strategy, it was noted that wait times for hip and knee replacement surgeries throughout the province have finally reached their access targets. From August/September 2005 to February 2009, there was a 56 per cent improvement in wait times for hip replacement surgery and a 58 per cent improvement in wait times for knee replacement surgery.

"There is a misconception that our wait lists are still incredibly long. The reality is that you don't have to wait as long as you might think for a hip or knee replacement and you can plan your surgery around your life, not the other way around," says Dr. John Murnaghan, orthopaedic surgeon, Holland Orthopaedic and Arthritic Centre. "You also have choice as a patient, you can request a particular surgeon or ask to have an appointment with the surgeon with the next available appointment, which includes senior surgeons."

A highlight of the system is using Advanced Practice Physiotherapists who are specially trained to conduct comprehensive physical assessments, provide education and offer treatment options to patients. If it appears that patients require a hip or knee replacement, a consultation with an orthopaedic surgeon is arranged. The goal is to ensure that each patient is assessed promptly after referral and provided with the information they need to maximize their function, whether they are going on to see the surgeon or not. Advanced Practice Physiotherapists also see patients for long term follow-up after surgery in a team approach with the orthopaedic surgeons.

How the New System Works

Step 1: Make an appointment with your family doctor to discuss your hip or knee arthritis

Step 2: Ask your doctor to obtain a standardized referral form from http://www.sunnybrook.ca/uploads/HKAP_Ref_Req.pdf and fax to 1-877-411-4577 or 416-599-4577

Step 3: Receive a call for an appointment at the Assessment Centre

Step 4: Visit the Assessment Centre for a physical assessment and to discuss treatment options and whether you need surgery

Step 5: If you do require hip or knee surgery, a consultation will be scheduled with an orthopaedic surgeon – you may ask for the first available appointment or choose to wait for a specific surgeon

Step 6: Meet the orthopaedic surgeon and book the date of your surgery

Step 7: Hip or knee replacement surgery

"The Holland Centre coordinates the entire care experience for hip and knee patients from assessment through to surgery and post-operative follow-up," says Matthew Anderson, CEO, Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network. "Tens of thousands of people from Toronto and across Ontario have been able to recover faster and better as a result of the Holland Centre's approach to hip and knee replacement surgery."