

Pembroke Regional Hospital Excels In Compassionate, Timely Delivery Of Regional Breast Screening Program

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PEMBROKE – While routine breast screening can represent a stressful experience for many women, the Pembroke Regional Hospital works hard to ensure that those requiring additional imaging, biopsies or surgical procedures are receiving these appointments as quickly as possible.

“Our region is very fortunate to have such quick turn-around times,” said Radiologist Dr. Raluca Antonescu who is the clinical lead for the Mammography program at PRH. “If, after the initial exam, an abnormality is found, patients are called back for additional imaging and it doesn’t take long to be recalled – usually within a few days of the first appointment,” Dr. Antonescu said.

For some, that callback results in a determination that everything is fine and no further testing is required.

Others may require a biopsy, Dr. Antonescu said, and that can often be scheduled within a week-and-a-half of the original exam. And if surgery is required, patients are usually booked in to meet with a surgeon within two to three weeks of the original mammogram.

According to the latest statistics (2018-2019) from the Cancer Care Ontario branch of Ontario Health, and for the fifth consecutive year, all wait times at Pembroke Regional Hospital for the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) exceeded provincial targets.

For example, 98.8% of PRH patients requiring additional imaging received their callback within the targeted three weeks of their initial screening, compared to 80.5% of patients province-wide.

Dr. Antonescu said these results speak to the precision of the service and the expertise of her team which includes onsite radiologists Dr. Marlene Van Gentvoort, Dr. Fred Matzinger and Dr. Abe Choi. “There is excellent work being done in terms of identifying what is seen,” she said, noting that this means less risk of unnecessary call backs.

Dr. Jean Seely, Regional Breast Imaging Lead for the Ontario Breast Screening Program said regular breast cancer screening with mammography saves the greatest number of lives from breast cancer for women 40 years and older. “In improving timely access to additional testing for abnormal recalls, Pembroke Regional Hospital is supporting the high-quality Ontario Breast Screening Program and helping to improve the outcome of their patients.”

Breast imaging and breast surgery are part of regional programs at Pembroke Regional Hospital, said Diagnostic Imaging Director Jim Lumsden, adding that PRH performs biopsies for patients coming from other hospitals in Renfrew County and also provides radiologist support to the Deep River and District Hospital.

“Our team recognizes how stressful procedures like this can be for our patients and are sensitive to that throughout the process,” Mr. Lumsden said.

Clerks Stephanie Eckford and Lucia Della Penta echoed that sentiment, noting that staff care about the outcome for each patients and where possible, try to accommodate things such as unexpected biopsies as quickly as possible through extended hours that help to accommodate patient schedules.

Women ages 50 to 74 can be screened as part of the Ontario Breast Screening Program and can be self-referred if they are an Ontario resident who has never had breast cancer. Participation in the program for women under 50 years of age and those 75 years and older requires a physician referral.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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