

PRACTICE NEWS

Dr. Darren Larsen
Lead Physician
Thornhill Village Family Health Organization

www.tmcdocs.info



Thornhill Medical Centre

Welcome to my first practice newsletter !!

Changes are afoot in my practice, and I thought I would take the opportunity to write to each of you and bring you up to speed!

Over the past few years, many of you have been with us as we implemented some strategic changes to our clinic that have served to make it a model of primary care delivery in Ontario, and one which is often visited by other groups that are seeking to increase the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of their care. This began with movement to a very robust primary care model, known as the Family Health Organization, in which we are now well invested. This took us off the “fee for service treadmill” where in order to be paid, patients had to attend the office for every problem, of even the most minor nature. Now we are paid yearly for a basket of services that allow us to be innovative in our care delivery. We have hired more nurses (two are now working at all times during the day), use electronic communication, are focusing on maximum prevention interventions, and are beginning innovative programs in Diabetes Care, Aging at Home, and Palliative Care. Within our practice location we now have a suite of allied health providers including physiotherapy, massage therapy, chiropractic, psychology and a dietician. We regularly teach medical students, nursing students and Family Medicine Residents through various universities and colleges.

As well, you will note that the office has now gone “paperless” in as much as we can control. We have had our Electronic Medical Record for nearly 4 years now, and when next in you will notice that no paper charts exist in our administrative area any longer. The EMR has streamlined our ability to track information about your care, from consultant reports to lab results to advanced tests, and has vastly improved the quality of

our records. Provincially, our office is now seen as an “Advanced User” of Electronic Medical Records, and many groups tour our facility to see how their workflow can be improved and electronics can be implemented in an effective, efficient way. We are now working toward highly evolved “meaningful use” of our EMR to improve health outcomes in our patients with many chronic disease states and in the world of preventative healthcare.

You may have been part of many education opportunities available to our patients over the years. These include our up-to-date website (www.tmcdocs.info), a ten cycle Patient Education Series, preventative care mail-outs and specific interventions for drug recalls and emerging illness issues. We are excited about the future here as well, with further evolution possible in the area of managed Diabetic Clinics, group care and education.

All of this is meant to create the best possible experience for our patients and their families as they journey through the spectrum of illness and health in their lifetimes. We are very proud of our health outcomes measures and the work we are doing.

Next steps Where are we going?

By now, many of you have learned that I have recently gone back to school myself. I have been invited to take part in the first cohort of physicians in the Schulich School of Executive Management's Masters Certificate in Physician Leadership, sponsored by the Ontario and Canadian Medical Associations.

As well, I have just been recruited to take on the role of Senior Peer Leader at Ontario

MD, the provider of EMR funding for physicians in Ontario. This role will see me working two days per week at their offices in downtown Toronto, and as an advisor in various clinics across the province. I am very excited about this new venture. The opportunity to create major healthcare system changes and improvements is very real in this new job, and I feel privileged to be able to take part.

What does this mean? How will it change your experience as my patient?

In order for me to take on this new role, it is necessary for me to move my practice from 4.5 days per week, to 3.5 days. Starting in January, my days at the office will be Monday (8:30 am - 5:00 pm), Tuesday (8:30 am - 9:00 pm) and Thursday (8:30 am - 5:00 pm). Over the last 5 years, I have intentionally taken on very few new patients, not fully replacing those who have left my care, so the good news is that I have capacity within my practice to reduce my time. My available days may now require some planning on your part, though, to ensure that you can see me for your issues very soon after they become a problem.

The beauty of being in a group model of care is that emergencies in my patients are cared for quickly by colleagues if I am unavailable. I must emphasize, though, that patients will be booked with my associates only for urgent problems if I am away or on vacation. It is still my intention to personally look after the vast majority of your care.

To ensure timely access to my available appointments, I will be implementing a new booking system called **Advanced Access Scheduling**. This ensures that no issue will have to wait more than 24 - 48 hours to be seen, and that urgent problems can nearly always be accommodated. (see below)

As well, the concept of the "right person for the right work" will also be employed within our clinic. Our nurses are available for appointments directly. There may be times when you will be asked to see them if they are the best people to take care of or triage your problem.

As always, because of the extended hours services we offer, we ask you to avoid the use of walk-in clinics. These clinics have no relationship with you, frequently make decisions without enough information, over-prescribe medications to move people through their doors quickly, and have no access to your medical records. When we are closed (overnights, on weekends and during holidays) the on-call nurse and doctor can be reached by calling our main office number and following the automated routing menu.

Hopefully you are already aware of our evening and weekend hours for urgent care. Patients are seen by appointment, so please call. We do not operate a walk-in style of care for these sessions. This is especially important as many of our doctors have hospital and operating room duties that may take them from the office unexpectedly.

What is Advanced Access scheduling? How does this work?

Advanced Access Scheduling is a system whereby availability of appointments in a day attempts to match the natural demand. It takes into account peak demand periods for short visits such as after long weekends and during flu season. It ensures that most patients can be seen by their usual doctor within 24 to 48 hours.

Basically, the way appointments are booked will change. Preventative Health Exams (previously known as "checkups" or "physicals") are booked more in times of low illness demand. They can be scheduled in advance, and are used to ensure that patients receive all of their important screening tests, examinations and preventative care discussions at age and illness appropriate intervals. These visits do not need to be yearly, unless you have specifically been told to make them so. For example, young women with three

previously normal pap smears and no major risk factors may only require repeat paps every 3 years. Children of school age, while growing, should be seen every two years. Adult males under 60 usually require a preventative health exam every 3 years if they are well. At the end of every health exam I will remind you when your next should be. For an excellent review of current Canadian guidelines check out the following website:

www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca/Publication/pdf/autre/periodicexam.pdf

If you are calling for an appointment about an illness issue, you will be offered the next three available appointment times. These may be the same day or next, but should be within 48 hours. If these three slots are not optimal for you, you may be asked to for a time you are free over the next two days. If you are not free during that period, we will ask you to call back and make an appointment at a time when you are available within the following 48 hours. Long term booking of appointments for anything other than Preventative Health Care Visits, procedures, or major counseling sessions will no longer be done.

If you are not sure that you need to be seen at all for your problem, please feel free to speak to our nurses for advice. Each of these professionals is outstanding and we are very lucky to have them as part of our team.

New Patients... am I accepting??

I am honored that many of you have thought highly enough of my care to refer your friends and family to me. This has been an exciting source of new personalities within my practice.

For the immediate future, though, I am not able to take new patients into my practice with the exception of spouses of my existing patients (not already seeing one of my partners) and children moving over from pediatricians to Family Practice.

More excitement in the future...

There will be lots more happening at Thornhill Village Family Health Organization over the next year or so. You may soon be able to interact with your chart electronically, through a feature called My Doctor.ca Health Portal. This will give you access to parts of your chart, the ability to input important data (blood sugars, blood

pressure etc) and learn about chronic disease management in self care. There is a video about Health Portal benefits at the following web page:

<https://www.mydoctor.ca/patient/splashMcIn.do>

As well, we will soon be expanding. We are currently looking at novel and innovative ways to incorporate the two other buildings on our property into clinical areas. These may be the new locations of our Diabetes clinic, group care and nursing areas and may possibly house other allied health providers who will work with us as a team.

If you have questions... Please ask!

I am happy to discuss any of the above points with you when you next come in to see me. Or alternately, feel free to speak to my nurses and staff.

The terrific people working with me who you have come to know are:

Physicians: Dr. Janet Morse, Dr. Nick Voudouris, Dr. Roy Blachowitz, Dr. Colleen Cheung and Dr. Robin Rosen

Nurses: Jamie, Bonnie, Brianna, Heather, Lori and Martha

Business Staff: Luiza, Monica, Fay, Janelle, Melissa and Jenna.

We can be reached by telephone at 905-889-3634, by fax at 905-889-3986, through our website at www.tmcdocs.info and by email at info@tmcdocs.info.

It is my hope that the changes I have outlined in this newsletter are clear and as exciting to you as they are to me. I look forward to looking after you in my team-based environment well into the future!

All the best from me to you and your family in the New Year!



Darren Larsen, MD