



AMAZING PEOPLE DOING AMAZING THINGS

Cancer Care Continues During Covid-19 Pandemic

Cancer does not stop during a pandemic, and it's vital patients in active treatment continue to follow their care plan. That is why the staff of the Hospital's Center for Cancer Care has taken extra measures to ensure their patients continue to receive safe, appropriate, and compassionate care.

"Covid-19 brings a new level of stress to the Center, but we have all worked together to put processes in place to keep our patients and staff safe," says **Ruth Ford**, Clinical Manager of Radiation Oncology. Because of the specific licensing requirements necessary to provide certain types of cancer care, Ruth says it is critical all Oncology staff remain healthy. "For example, our Radiation Therapists are the only clinical staff licensed to deliver the radiation treatment patients require."

Ruth believes the current situation has brought staff closer together, with the same shared purpose of ensuring patients continue to receive compassionate care. "Cancer is already so isolating. It's more important than ever that we smile, even while wearing masks, and lift up our patients," she says.

Leah Van Ryen, RN, Medical Oncology, shares that sentiment. "Now more than ever, especially with the no visitor policy and so many new patients starting treatment – we are it for our patients," she says.

"We are there, not only to guide them through their journey, but to ease their anxiety and hold their hands when their loved ones can't be here." She says the staff spend extra time talking about what's happening and providing education about how patients can protect themselves and their loved ones. They also make calls to family members to let them know how the patient's day is going, to review information that needs to be shared or reinforced, and to answer questions. "So many of our patients and their loved ones have developed relationships with us, so they want to know how we're doing. They ask if we have enough supplies and if we need anything, and thank us profusely for being here and for coming to work," Leah says.

She adds the bond between Cancer Center staff and their patients has intensified during the past six weeks. "We have become like family more than ever during this challenging time. We provide reassurance to them, even when we're feeling uncertain ourselves."

Maddi Coons, a Social Worker with the Center, shares something one of her patients recently said to her. "She told me the feeling that life has changed forever from how we once knew it because of the pandemic - that unsettling feeling and fear of the unknown – is how her world has felt ever since she was diagnosed with cancer." Maddi says the Cancer Center staff have always empathized with their patients, but it feels different now. "We have always leaned in and cared for them, but now we have more of an understanding as to what it feels like to be put in a situation that comes out of nowhere and turns your life upside down."



Staff from Radiation Oncology (top) and Medical Oncology, are doing all they can to continue to deliver safe, compassionate care to patients of Exeter Hospital's Center for Cancer Care.