

Peter Taylor has a suspected fractured ankle examined by nurse practitioner Kelly Van Camp while mom Ana Taylor looks on at Markham Stouffville Hospital's Fast Track Clinic.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Emergency Fast Track hit with hospital patients

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

While the number of patients using Markham Stouffville Hospital's emergency department has grown just as fast as the population around the facility, it seems wait times haven't.

Hospital records, statistics for its fiscal year, from April 1 to March 31, and in the 2000-01 year, 37,752 patients were treated by the emergency department.

In 2001-02 that number jumped to 40,613 and rose again in 2002-03 to 44,767. In fact, up to Dec. 2003, 31,176 people had already been treated by emergency staff with another three months to go.

But, despite the exponential increase in the number of people walking through the doors, since 2001 hospital staff say the average length of stay for emergency patients, including treatment and wait times, has stayed constant at 3:1 to 3:3 hours.

To what does it attribute this tremendous efficiency?

The hospital's doctors and nurses and recent technological advancements in medical equipment deserve some credit.

So does the hospital's Fast Track Clinic.

The clinic opened in 2001

ensuring those patients with less urgent needs still receive treatment in a timely fashion.

Patients at the clinic still have access to all the hospital's services. In fact, everyone who walks into emergency is initially diagnosed by the same triage nurse as to the urgency of their problem. Those with less urgent needs are simply funneled through to the clinic.

...if you break your arm, it's not a life-threatening problem. So you might otherwise wait. But, it is an issue that needs to be dealt with so we want to try and decrease the waiting time.

Patients suffering from anything from an ear ache, cough, or sore throat to minor lacerations, fractures and sprains are all pointed towards the Fast Track Clinic behind the hospital's main lobby.

Dr. Dave Austin, the hospital's chief of emergency, says the clinic has been positive for both patients and hospital staff.

"In the overall scheme of things, if you break your arm, it's not a life-threatening problem. So you might otherwise wait. But it is an issue that needs to be dealt with so we want to try and decrease the waiting time. The clinic allows us to do that."

"Plus, having the clinic frees up room in main emergency department to deal with sicker patients," he said.

"The nice thing about it is it allows us to continue to keep patients flowing through the department."

Hospital spokesperson Pam Brodie said feedback from patients has been nothing but positive.

"We can continue to keep the flow moving and offer patients a service in which they don't have to wait for a prolonged period of time before they see a doctor," Dr. Austin said. "People like that."

The clinic is open Tuesday to Saturday from 2 until 10 p.m. and Sunday and Monday from noon until 10 p.m. and is staffed by an emergency department physician and a nurse practitioner.

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Everyone Welcome!

STOUFFVILLE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
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