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MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL

INNOVATION LEADS THE WAY

Markham Stouffville Hospital has the people, the ideas and the willingness for a bright future.



Dr. George Arnold Chief of Clinical Innovation and Strategic Ventures at Markham Stouffville Hospital. Photo: Brian Hamilton

Innovation is in the DNA of Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH). It's one cornerstone of a storied past, it's engrained in the day-to-day culture, and it's a huge part of a shared vision for the future. And the spirit of innovation is found at the heart of any initiative – great or (seemingly) small – that benefits the patient.

The right people

For any new idea to be successful at a large community hospital, certain individuals need to be in place, according to Dr. George Arnold, Chief of Clinical Innovation and Strategic Ventures at MSH. "Our new CEO Jo-anne Marr is very much aware of the importance of innovation," says Dr. Arnold. "And she has put in place the necessary resources. That's number one. Without that support, nothing could happen."

Consequently three key people at MSH have a focus squarely on innovation. In addition to Dr. Arnold are May Chang, the executive vice president responsible for the innovation portfolio, and Adam Erwood, a dedicated manager who has his Masters in Innovation.

Having a dedicated team – and an engaged and interested board of directors – means MSH is already very well situated, says Dr. Arnold. "I think we have a great structure to make innovations happen. You then need people with innovative ideas and you need an environment in which you can test those ideas. We've got both."

Ideas abound

There's certainly no shortage of innovations.

One program, called NICU Connect, uses digital technology to connect the NICU care team to families during daily rounds. Another important initiative is a study showing and leveraging the benefits of pet ownership to bolster patients' health and wellbeing. Meanwhile, new strategies employed in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology have seen C-sections decrease from 30 percent to beneath 23 percent, says Dr. Arnold. "We now have one of the lowest C-section rates in the Greater Toronto Area and one of the lowest rates across Canada."

Yet another stand-out innovation at MSH is the introduction of the Emergency Department's wait-time clock, which enables members of the community to go online and see how many people are currently in the department, and a calculation of the potential wait time. "It's a simple idea, but it's something that's very useful to the patients who use our department," he says.

MSH culture

Dr. Arnold, who also holds the title of Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology, describes a hospital staff that is characterized by its collective ability to look at problems, engage all stakeholders, implement solutions and continually search for improvement – all to benefit patients and the health care system.

"You need people that are willing to embrace change. You need the managerial structure. You need the senior administration support to actually facilitate that change," he says. "I would say that the environment is there, but that's not enough. We've managed to not only have it, we've managed to extract it, bring it out, and grow it."

The desire to succeed through innovation trickles down to every aspect of the hospital, says Dr. Arnold, who's been at MSH for over 24 years. He notes the extremely low turnover for medical staff as a telling indicator. "And we are all there to support one another," he says.

That support system, crucially, extends to a connected community that truly cares: notably, its donors

For President and CEO Jo-anne Marr, the dedication and commitment of donors is essential to the spirit of innovation and the future of MSH. In the ever-evolving landscape of community health care, she says, donors can provide funds for things that the government does not fund. And those that lead to real impacts. (See: "Generosity = innovation.") And the donors and volunteers in this community, she says, are united and ready for future challenges.

"As a health care professional with more than 30 years experience, I have never experienced anything quite like the bond at MSH," says Marr. "I know that together we're stronger and more successful."

Spreading innovation

And that confidence is spreading.

Cue the formation three years ago of the Joint Centres for Transformative Healthcare Innovation, a co-opted group comprising Markham Stouffville Hospital, Mackenzie Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre, St. Joseph's Health Centre, North York General Hospital and Michael Garron Hospital/Toronto East Health Network.

"We came together quite organically," Marr says of the group with a history of collaboration. "We got together with an idea: let's share resources and expertise on how to spread better practices. Ultimately, let's bring better values to our health care system."

At the Joint Centres' annual one-day signature exhibition, InnovationEX, held this past April at MSH, visiting Federal Health Minister Jane Philpott underlined the importance of innovation and addressed the professionals driving it.

"You've not only got the vision and the ideas, you've got the determination to make that change happen," said the minister. "And then let's figure out a way to spread it across your region, spread it across Ontario, spread it across the country and around the world."

In the meantime, the never-ending goal at MSH is ensure that every single patient who comes through the doors feels that they're getting the highest quality care possible. Because, in fact, they are.

GENEROSITY= INNOVATION

How the spirit of giving sparks innovation and growth at MSH

How much was given?

- **$27 million** over **6 years** for **27,500** new pieces of equipment

What did it purchase?

- **$1.1 million**: **3 patient** monitors and **18** colonoscopes
- **$5 million** in MRI machines and CT scanners
- **$1.14** Lab Power Processor
- **3.6 million** for ongoing patient-care upgrades

How did it help?

- **214** Emergency daily visits with shorter overall wait times
- **779** patients per day treated
- More state-of-the-art diagnostics with **4,483** exams each day
- New Cancer Care Clinic with **16** daily chemotherapy visits



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