

Rehab and Wellbeing Centre brings non-traditional therapies to hospital setting

By Catherine Shannon

Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital has opened the doors to a new kind of clinic, with a big payoff.

The Rehab and Wellbeing Centre bridges the worlds of traditional and non-traditional therapies, providing expert assessment, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in a convenient location within the hospital. All patients, staff and visitors now have access to services like massage therapy, acupuncture, chiropractic care and a comprehensive foot-care program, along with additional physiotherapy and wellness programs including yoga.

Revenues from the centre are directed back into the hospital to fund new capital equipment and improved patient care. "Patients are truly benefiting on every level," says Neil Closner, Vice-President of Business Development at Mount Sinai. "The location, quality of care and variety of services make the centre so important. Plus, we are supporting the hospital at the same time. It's a win-win situation, and distinguishes the Rehab and Wellbeing Centre as a unique service offering."

The centre is providing new and useful treatments to a variety of patient populations both from within the hospital and to the general public in downtown Toronto. Many of the hospi-



Dr. Adam Chen, an acupuncturist, is one of nine practitioners on the multidisciplinary team at Mount Sinai Hospital's Rehab and Wellbeing Centre.

tal's special clinics, including the Wasser Pain Management Centre and the S.C. Cooper Sport Medicine Clinic, are proving to be sources of referrals for treatments like massage

and acupuncture. The Rehab and Wellbeing Centre's multidisciplinary, nine-person team of experts also receives referrals from the hospital's orthopaedic surgeons, who are turn-

ing to non-invasive treatments before recommending surgery.

"The centre is one of the first within a hospital to provide access to integrative therapies that will help people function optimally, and to achieve day-to-day wellbeing," says Debra Hage, Clinic Co-ordinator. "Doctors are becoming more open to non-traditional therapies as part of the care program, and report that their patients have shown positive results."

Before patient Ramy Elitzur began treatment for a frozen shoulder at the centre, he was unsure of what to expect. "I had tried other therapies that didn't work. What kept me optimistic was the fact that I was referred to the centre by highly-regarded orthopaedic surgeons at Mount Sinai," says Elitzur, who has benefited from active release therapy (ART) – a rehabilitative treatment that stimulates muscles to increase blood circulation and restore range of motion.

Hage explains that successful treatment has a lot to do with communication between practitioners at the centre. Each week, they meet to discuss patients' needs, sharing their combined decades of experience to develop the best individualized care programs. For instance, a patient might start treatment with one practitioner before switching to a different

kind of therapy at the centre – depending on what he or she will respond to best. "We treat every patient as if they are our own family," says Hage. "We go that extra step for them, and we always make sure a member of our team is available to answer questions."

Dr. Adam Chen, an acupuncturist at the centre, says that everyone on the team is there to help patients find the source of their pain and provide the appropriate education and treatments to alleviate it. Each patient is regularly assessed to see how they are progressing, and whether they should consult a physician regarding any possible underlying causes of their discomfort.

In addition to their part-time work at Mount Sinai, some of the centre's practitioners work with high-performance athletes in the Toronto sports scene, where every move counts. At the Rehab and Wellbeing Centre, these practitioners have quickly developed a reputation for being down-to-earth and attentive to all patients. "They are very patient and explain everything that they're doing," says Elitzur of his own experience.

Practitioners also draw upon their personal experiences with recovery. Before working at Mount Sinai, Kathy Felkai recovered from chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia with help from yoga. Now, as a yoga instructor, she helps patients who are recovering from chronic pain, injuries, surgery and cancer. "The beauty of yoga is that there is something for everyone. My role as a teacher is to guide people to modify yoga so they can find what works for them," says Felkai. "I classify yoga as a system of self care which will help you tune in to yourself and start the healing process."

Patients, staff and visitors are all taking advantage of the new range of wellness classes in addition to individualized treatments at the Rehab and Wellbeing Centre. Most of the Centre's services are covered by extended health-care plans. "We're proud to be a 'one-stop shop' for the best care, and the best range of non-invasive treatments," says Hage. "Our goal is to continue to be on the leading edge of non-traditional therapies offered in a hospital."

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