

ICU ranks second in international nutrition audit

By Karen Smith

A second-place ranking in an International nutrition audit means Kingston General Hospital's Intensive care unit (ICU) will now be one of the standards against which all others are measured.

KGH was recently awarded a "Best of the Best" award for its showing among 157 ICUs in 22 countries in this survey designed to improve upon nutrition therapies provided to critically ill patients around the world.

In a project led by Naomi Jones at KGH's Clinical Evaluation Research Unit, the survey collected data on the clinical condition, nutritional status, nutrition practices and outcomes of almost 3,000 critically ill patients beginning in May 2008. Participants collected data over a three-month period and catalogued the results online using a web-based collection tool.

Participants were able to compare their performance against ICUs within their own country or region, against all ICUs in the database as well as against recommendations outlined in *The Canadian Clinical Practice Guidelines for Nutrition Support in Mechanically Ventilated Critically Ill Patients*, authored by Clinical Evaluation Research Unit Director Dr. Daren Heyland, research dietitian Rupinder Dhallwal and KGH Critical Care Program Medical Director Dr. John Drower.

Conducting surveys of nutrition therapy in ICUs, explains Daren, helps define gaps between these recommendations and what actually occurs. "The prevalence of malnutrition is high in ICUs and this has a negative impact on clinical outcomes. By providing patients with the right nutrition, we can improve wound healing, boost their immune system and help their digestive system work more effectively which, together, favourably influence the chance of surviving critical illness."

ICU dietitian Fiona Aris says the improvements come from a change in practice and approach. "We used to be reactive where nutrition was started after the most important treatments were in place. Now, we take a proactive approach where nutrition is considered an essential therapy for critical care patients."



(l-r) Critical Care Nutrition research team Dr. Daren Heyland, Rupinder Dhallwal and Naomi Jones present a "Best of the Best" of the award to the ICU clinical educator Judy Ferguson, Critical Care Program Medical Director Dr. John Drower, ICU Program Manager Reg Hart, Dietitian Fiona Aris, ECU Program Manager Christina Panopoulos-Rowe, Critical Care Program Operational Director Mae Squires, Senior Vice-President of Patient Care Programs and Chief Nursing Executive Eleanor Rivoire and Trillium Gift of Life Coordinator Gail-Anne Harris for their work in ensuring critically ill patients are best nourished.

The nutrition support process begins as soon as a patient enters the ICU. Physicians are proactive in getting feeding tubes placed immediately. Then a multidisciplinary team that includes Fiona, physicians, nurses and pharmacists work together to ensure the best nutrition care.

Attaining a "Best of the Best" rating among 157 ICUs is a significant achievement for KGH, says Daren, a Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at Queen's University. He credits much of the improvement to increased dietitian staffing in the ICU. "By allocating more dietary resources directly inside the ICU, we are able to better educate

staff about the importance of nutrition in treating critically ill patients. We've shown through this survey and others that improved nutrition can make a difference in patient outcomes."

"It is exciting and gratifying to learn that KGH is among the centres leading the world in nutrition therapy in the intensive care unit," says John. "Participation in these nutrition surveys have helped us raise awareness and understanding of the importance of nutrition in critically ill patients and how improved nutrition may lead to fewer complications and improved survival." □