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REPORT INSIDE

# Insites

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# Safety First

## Enhancing Safety in the New Hospital through Integrated Technology



Colleen Petersen, PRHC's Manager of Employee and Patient Safety

In the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC), newborn babies will wear tracking “tags” to ensure they’re never further away from their mothers than they should be. The Infant Abduction System is one of 13 technologies that make up an integrated system that will enhance safety and security for PRHC’s patients, staff and visitors in its new hospital.

“As we move to the new hospital, we’ll be moving ahead 30 years in terms of technology. That technology is going to allow us to create a safer environment for our patients, as well as our staff,” says Tom Holden, Vice President, Planning, at PRHC.

Among the 13 technologies that make up the integrated system coordinated by Hamilton’s AATEL Communications, are access control, an audio visual nurse call system and a patient wandering system. The technologies are linked via separate servers to software that collects, collates and distributes information.

“This is the first facility in Canada where all systems are integrated to operate seamlessly,” says Darren Croucher, President, AATEL Communications. “The systems can be centrally managed as well as viewed, allowing flexibility in their operation. This integration enhances patient safety by streamlining work processes and ensuring events and alarms are communicated effectively.”

As part of the patient wandering system, for example, patients may be equipped with “tags” that prevent them from taking an elevator or opening a door. Should a patient bypass the system, an alarm notifies the unit staff and security. Meanwhile, all actions will be recorded and processed by the surveillance system. An e-mail alert, complete with the patient’s photo will be automatically distributed, enabling a rapid response and retrieval of the patient.

“In building a new hospital, we’ve been given the opportunity

to put advanced information systems infrastructure behind the walls,” says Holden, adding PRHC will be home to the latest in wireless technology. “This gives us an array of opportunities today, and allows us to prepare for the potential of tomorrow’s advancements.”

Also as part of the integrated system, the Health Centre will have 32 internet protocol cameras providing full coverage of the facility and allowing centralized control and recording. From any authorized PC in the hospital, the cameras can be controlled and their images can be viewed. The cameras, in addition to panic stations in the parking lot, are among the technology that will increase patient and staff safety, which Holden notes, are co-dependent.

In its entirety, the integrated system will allow for early recognition and response, which as Colleen Petersen, PRHC’s Manager of Employee and



Above: Tom Holden, Vice President, Planning

Patient Safety, explains, is what safety is really all about.

“We will be notified of an event or an issue much more quickly, which will allow us, in turn, to respond more quickly,” she says, adding a swift response often improves outcomes for patients and staff.

While cutting edge, safety in the new hospital goes beyond the implementation of the integrated system. In fact, it has permeated the planning process and will continue to be equally as important as PRHC staff members plan for the transition to the new hospital. A clear patient focus was the first of the principles that guided the new hospital planning process.

The principal states that every effort must be made to reflect the changing nature and needs of the community served by the PRHC and provide flexibility for future changes in need or technology. Assumptions and decisions must be made in the best interest of the patient.

Principal Architect Michael Moxam, of Stantec Architecture Ltd., was among those who followed this principle when working to design the new hospital. Patient and staff safety was taken into account in all decision making, from the design of the nursing/communications centres and



Above: Patient wrist tag. Inset: Infant Abduction System tag. Courtesy of AATEL Communications.

patient rooms, to the 100 per cent accessible washrooms and non-slip floorings. Meanwhile, ideal infection control practices motivated the placement of the sink in patient rooms for example, while the need to isolate a patient presenting with symptoms of febrile respiratory illness aided in the design of the emergency department. Patient lift tracks over every medical and surgical bed space, paired with ongoing training and education for staff members, further PRHC's commitment to staff safety and safe patient handling.

From a safety perspective, Moxam is particularly proud of the design of the inpatient units. While interconnected, they are “neighbourhoods” in and of themselves, with the nursing/communications centres at the core. Patient and staff safety motivated the design, with its direct sightlines down the short corridors that surround the communications centre on each unit. The design also increases the visibility of the staff members, while decreasing the response time to their patients.

“Patient safety underlined everything we designed and devised for the new hospital – on the very smallest to the very largest scale,” said Moxam.

In the new hospital, when the Infant Abduction Systems sounds for the first time, everyone who helped with planning will know their efforts made a difference.

## New Patient Safety Technologies

- Access Control
- Cardiac Arrest System
- Clock System
- Emergency Panic System
- Intercom
- Interval Timers
- Infant Abduction System
- Nurse Call
- Patient Wandering System
- Security Management System
- Staff Duress
- Surveillance
- Video Management System