

Another first for hospital's award-winning Wellness Program



Christine Devine and Paul Smits, TEGH Wellness Coordinators, demonstrating the new ViPRT training tool. Photo Credit: Kevin Holm

Whether for the body, mind or soul, [Toronto East General Hospital's](#) (TEGH) award winning Wellness Program recognizes that a healthy and positive work environment goes far beyond the desk, nursing station or patient room. That is why the Wellness Program, introduced in 2004, promotes a culture of wellness that includes physical activity, supports mental well-being and fosters the inner spirit.

An on-site fitness facility and a variety of fitness classes, such as Latin Cardio Dance, Sports Conditioning, Strength Training, Indoor Cycle, Yoga and Bootcamp, form the core of the basic program. In

addition, there are indoor and outdoor walking circuits and an on-site physiotherapist who has proven to be beneficial in assisting staff in receiving care while not disrupting their working schedule.

Over the last several years, the program has expanded beyond its fitness focus to a more holistic model that recognizes the importance of nurturing the mind and the soul. As a result, meditation and art classes are offered, along with discounted on-site massage, acupuncture and shiatsu therapies. There is also a Staff In Need Fund available to assist staff and their immediate families who have endured a recent crisis resulting in personal financial hardship.

Mental wellness is a key priority. The hospital is one of few to have a comprehensive Mental Wellness Strategic Plan. This plan outlines the tools, resources and work culture needed to support mental wellness; outlines strategies to ensure mental illness and disabilities are recognized, managed and accommodated; and ensures work policies and practices are aligned with promoting mental wellness.



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Efforts are made to educate staff about healthy lifestyles, the importance of self-care and recognizing and dealing with stress symptoms. Monthly newsletters, regular updates on the hospital's intranet and an interactive ilearn module called Shiftwork 24, designed to address the impact of sleep and diet on the overall well-being of shiftworkers, all contribute to ongoing education. Special events, like the annual "Wellness Roadshow" are designed to bring awareness and a taste of wellness directly to departments where front line staff have difficulty making scheduled events. TEGH has also partnered with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that offers a wide variety of resources to staff including individual

confidential counseling and on-site lunch and learns on various wellness topics.

TEGH has been recognized for this comprehensive wellness focus, most recently in September 2011 at the annual Benefits Canada wellness awards. The hospital was first runner up in the health/wellness category for larger employers, honouring organizations who have demonstrated leadership and innovation when it comes to benefit plans and keeping employees healthy. The prior year, the Canada Order of Excellence, the highest level of recognition from Excellence Canada (formerly the National Quality Institute), was awarded to TEGH for successfully maintaining a focus on wellness over the long term. The hospital also received the PLATINUM Quality Healthcare Workplace Award from the Ontario Hospital Association in September 2010, awarded to four hospitals in Ontario for improving their workplace in ways that contribute to providers' quality of work life and the quality of care and services they deliver.

TEGH has just been chosen by the Conference Board of Canada as one of ten organizations across the country to take part in a study called "Making the Business Case for Investments in Workplace Health and Wellness."

Now, TEGH's Wellness Program is among the first Canadian fitness facilities to offer a new and exciting training tool to its employees. ViPR™ (VITALITY, PERFORMANCE and RECONDITIONING) is a tool that combines the use and benefit of the dumbbell, kettle bell, bar

bell, medicine ball, stability ball, balance equipment and speed ladders. The ViPR™ is available in a variety of weights (4 kg and up), has a range of over 9,000 exercises and can be modified to suit any fitness level. Invented by respected Canadian Exercise Scientist Michol Dalcourt, the ViPR™ has been field and outcome measure-tested for four years to validate its efficacy. It bridges the gap between movement and strength training, combining resistance training with physical agility that requires whole body integration and easily translates into life's daily activities.

Staff love the new wellness acquisition and the program in general, as evidenced by one comment from an appreciative staff member: "I'm thankful I work for an organization that cares so much about the well-being of their staff!"

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