

GBGH exploring innovative ways to bring appropriate care to the community with Rocket Doctor

Immediate Release

June 29, 2022 – Georgian Bay General Hospital (GBGH) has partnered with Rocket Doctor to trial a new service giving patients with an alternative option to the Emergency department (ED), while still providing access to appropriate health services. People visiting GBGH's Emergency department (ED) or consulting the hospital's website will be made aware of other alternatives, such as using Rocket Doctor's virtual same-day appointment services to potentially prevent the need for an ED visit. GBGH's Emergency department (ED) experiences overwhelming patient volumes during the summer months due to the area's surge in seasonal residents and tourism.

Partnering with a hospital is a first for Rocket Doctor, which has usually worked with rural and remote communities to offer virtual care services (i.e. through a local pharmacy). By connecting potential ED patients with Rocket Doctor, it is an opportunity for them to receive the appropriate care they need without contributing to ED wait times.

"Regardless of the summer season, GBGH's ED sees approximately 60 per cent of patients who have a minor illness or injury which could potentially have been addressed in another setting, leaving the Emerg for patients with more serious conditions," says Dr. Vikram Ralhan, emergency physician and chief of staff, GBGH. "In this community we have very limited access to walk-in, urgent care and after-hours clinics, so patients rely heavily on our ED for minor ailments - many of which can be handled through alternatives like their primary care provider or an available virtual option. Redirecting less acute patients to a virtual or other community service ensures they receive the right care in the right place at the right time, which is critical to reducing ED wait times and efficient patient flow."

In addition to virtual care, other alternatives include the North Simcoe Family Health Team Nurse Practitioner Clinic which is available to all North Simcoe residents, regardless of affiliation with a family doctor, including unattached patients. Patients who have a family physician affiliated with the North Simcoe Health Network can also contact their physician's office to access their After Hours Clinic.

Rocket Doctor provides same day virtual appointments with access to 250 emergency/family medicine physicians and specialists across Ontario in patients' area(s) of need. The service is covered by OHIP so there is no cost to patients and all information is completed in advance of the appointment so it doesn't impact time with a physician.

"When GBGH approached Rocket Doctor with the possibility of utilizing our service to provide an alternative option to the ED, we were very interested in how we could collaborate," says Dr. William Cherniak, founder and CEO, Rocket Doctor. "This is our first partnership with a hospital, and fits perfectly with our vision of working hand in hand with the public system to enhance

equitable access to care. We look forward to seeing how our service can provide some relief to staggering ED volumes in a time where health human resources are very challenging.”

To access the GBGH page on Rocket Doctor, use the following link:

<https://rocketdoctor.ca/georgian-bay-general-hospital/>

To access Rocket Doctor via GBGH’s website, use the following link:

<https://gbgh.on.ca/programs-and-services/emergency-department/>

In partnership with GBGH, the North Simcoe Ontario Health Team (NSOHT), is working on creating a seamless, coordinated and comprehensive system of care to best serve the needs of the community. North Simcoe communities include Midland, Penetanguishene, Tay Township, Tiny Township and Christian Island. The NSOHT is fully supportive of innovative approaches and alternative solutions that assist patients in finding the most appropriate care for their needs.

“While still in the early implementation stage of integrated care efforts across health and social services, our OHT is very interested in this work between GBGH and Rocket Doctor,” says Christine Brander, director, NSOHT. “This is a creative way to help ease some of the strain on the hospital while still ensuring patients have access to care for low acuity conditions. It’s important for patients to be aware of all publicly funded care options and empower their choice of care setting. We support the hospital’s efforts to educate the public on alternatives, as well as when it is most appropriate to visit the Emergency department.”

Given the increase in ED visits and ongoing staffing challenges at the hospital due to health human resources shortages province-wide, GBGH is encouraging people to carefully consider if their condition requires an ED visit or if their needs can be met through an alternative like Rocket Doctor. The ED is the right place to receive care if you’re having an emergency, some of which include:

- A change in mental status (i.e. confusion)
- Mental health crisis
- Seizures or convulsions
- Broken bone or wound
- Chest pain or tightness
- Baby under 3 months with fever
- Severe vomiting or diarrhea
- Stiff neck and sensitivity to light
- Severe headache and dizziness
- Difficulty breathing

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About GBGH:

Georgian Bay General Hospital (GBGH) is a 113-bed acute care community hospital located in Midland, Ontario. The hospital offers emergency, ambulatory, acute, intensive and complex continuing care, as well as imaging, dialysis, obstetrical and rehabilitation services. GBGH serves the areas of Midland, Penetanguishene, Christian Island as well as Tay, Tiny, Springwater and Georgian Bay Townships.

About Rocket Doctor:

Rocket Doctor is a rapidly growing digital health platform and marketplace transforming the way comprehensive care is delivered across North America by bringing an advanced doctor's office directly to patients. They are a passionate group of medical doctors, researchers, technical experts, and patient care professionals who believe every person deserves access to quality healthcare. They have now cared for over 180,000 patients across Canada (currently Ontario, Alberta, and BC) and the State of California.

About the NSOHT:

The North Simcoe Ontario Health Team is a formal alliance between Georgian Bay General Hospital, the North Simcoe Family Health Team, CSC Chigamik CHC and Wendat Community Programs. Through consultation with affiliates and supporters, including patients and caregivers, partners are committed to improving care and the patient experience across all health and community services. For more information, visit www.nsoht.ca