



Case Managers Make a Difference

Case managers and care pathways have made a big impact on Edmonton MSK patient journeys

Stella Callender always had an interest in orthopedics, but after she completed her nursing education there weren't a lot of positions available. Working first in neuro-trauma and then at the hospital orthopedic unit, it was another twelve years before she was approached by the management at the Edmonton Musculoskeletal (MSK) Centre to consider a position as a case manager.

The only problem? *What on earth was a case manager?*

Case managers, as it turns out, are most often registered nurses employed to offer a continuous point of contact throughout a patient's care pathway – from the moment the patient is referred to the MSK Centre until their care is returned to the family physician. Paired with a medical office assistant and working with two to three surgeons, the case manager is the first person the patient meets, partakes in all assessment meetings, and is physically with the patient throughout the process.

"The only part of this journey we do not take part in is the actual surgery," explains Stella, after four years of working as a case manager for Edmonton MSK. "Case managers assist patients with education, coaching and care, offer a point of contact after surgery for questions and concerns, and participate in the post-operative follow-up care."



The Edmonton MSK Centre is located on the second floor of Northgate Centre, above Walmart. Free parking is available.

The hip and knee joint replacement care pathway was developed in the early 2000s by early organizers Dr. Don Dick and Dr. Cy Frank. Capital Health, David Thompson, Calgary Health Regions and the Alberta Bone & Joint Health Institute partnered to ensure patients would be seen by a multidisciplinary team to and arrive at the hospital ready for surgery, and to eliminate unnecessary delays. This

cont...

Case Managers Make a Difference

care pathway is now a standard of care across the province under the direction of Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Before the care pathway was established, there were no case managers. Patients were often expected to travel to many different locations to access pre-operative assessments and tests. It often wasn't clear where – or to whom – to direct a patient for questions or management. The Edmonton MSK Centre case manager is a patient guide for the whole treatment - including whom to see, what to do, required medications, interventions, patient history, pre-operative education, post-operative follow-up and family & patient access to information.



Stella Callender (top left) has been a case manager for the Edmonton MSK Centre since 2012, offering personal care to patients from the moment they are referred to the centre until they have completely recovered from their surgery.

It's the kind of patient-centric care that made a real difference for patient Audrey, who had three surgeries in four years and not all were smooth sailing. "The last one was the roughest, I was feeling pretty good but had a rough time with necrotic tissue and infection – ended up in hospital and took four months to heal – but I was at Edmonton MSK three times a week and Stella cleaned and cared for the knee." With so many problems, there were more than a few opinions about removing the knee replacement and putting in a temporary joint. "Stella and my surgeon said to just wait it out. The others wanted to take my replacement out but they said to wait. I wouldn't have my knee if it weren't for them."

Ann is another Edmonton MSK Centre patient who experienced a hip replacement both before and after the care pathway was established and case managers were assigned to patients. "My first hip replacement was 18 years ago and went without a hitch but required significant running around before the operation," she

cont...

Case Managers Make a Difference

remembers. “My last hip revision was in 2015 and I’m feeling very close to 100%. Everything was all one stop – just so much more coordinated, sharing notes and knowing my name without looking at a chart. Everyone is very knowledgeable and makes you feel comfortable with everything that is happening.”

Stella notes that this kind of streamlined process for patients has all but eliminated gaps in care and has helped her realize a scope of practice that involves the full patient journey. “I’m interacting with patients and families throughout the whole process, from patient engagement to recovery. Teaching, coaching, encouraging, and helping with pain management support and all the questions that come up in between.”

Audrey couldn’t agree more. “The Edmonton MSK clinic is the best money that AHS ever spent. Optimization centres for surgery are a fantastic idea, because there’s a learning curve when you need a surgery and Edmonton MSK makes sure you know what to expect at every point – what to expect from yourself and what to expect from your surgeon, and what to do if something goes wrong.”

Ray, a retired athletic therapist, has had two surgeries in one year. “The surgeon is the least important part of the team, it’s the education working up to it and the follow-up care by the team that really makes the difference,” he notes. “The staff at the clinic felt hand-picked. They went above and beyond every day, as soon as you walk in, you notice. Pleasant. Accommodating. Professional.”

Back at Edmonton MSK, Stella is passionate about the impact the care pathways – and being a case manager - have made in her experience. “This change has made improvements for the patient, for the surgeon, for the outcome of the surgeries and for our working environment. Everybody wins.”

The [Edmonton Musculoskeletal Centre](#) is located on the 2nd floor of Northgate Centre in Edmonton. The clinic is open from Monday to Friday from 8am until 4pm and physician referrals can be made online using [Alberta Netcare eReferral](#) or by fax with the Alberta Health Services [Hip and Knee Replacement Referral Form](#).

If your clinic is interested in more information about how to submit an eReferral through Alberta Netcare contact the eHealth Support Team 1-855-643-8649 health.ehrdeployment@gov.ab.ca

