A step forward for patients using QCH’s FAST Program

Foot pain can be caused by many different factors from foot conditions to disease, injuries and muscle problems to poor biomechanical alignment. If you talk to a patient who suffers from foot and ankle pain, you’ll see immediately how it affects their quality of life from living with pain and discomfort to not being able to enjoy everyday outings and activities. That’s why prompt, skilled care and treatment – and maybe a surgical solution, is so important.

**FAST** – QCH’s new *Foot and Ankle Screening and Triage Program* allows patients to be seen quicker so they can find the causes of their condition and be directed towards treatment options that will alleviate – or cure- their symptoms. The unique and innovative FAST Program, the first of its kind in the region, ensures that patients of QCH’s only onsite foot and ankle specialist, Dr. Matthew Di Silvestro, are being seen at the right time, at the right place and for the right condition.

“One big issue was the extraordinary wait time for people with foot or ankle problems to see a Surgeon,” says Dr. Di Silvestro. “Once they are referred from their Family Physician, it could take two or three years on a Surgeon’s wait list to even be assessed.”

“The second problem is a vast majority of these patients who have been waiting so long would not actually benefit from surgical interventions.”

“The FAST Program allows referring Physicians to direct patients to be properly assessed before determining if surgery is even an option,” explains Dr. Di Silvestro.

The FAST Program fulfills that much-needed assessment step to find out if their issue can be dealt with another way besides surgically. Patients are assessed by a physiotherapist with advanced training at their initial visit in the clinic. At this visit, an individualized evaluation is performed and the patient’s options discussed. If surgery is considered, the patient is then referred for consultation with the surgeon.

Since starting the FAST Program in August 2014, more than 2500 patients have been assessed, greatly reducing the wait times for those individuals and patient satisfaction rate following their initial visit is high. On average, 80 percent of patients do not proceed to surgical consult. These individuals are referred back to their primary provider with a plan to pursue additional non-
surgical options such as physiotherapy, chiropody, custom orthotics or footwear modifications. For the remaining 20% of patients who are ready to pursue a surgical option, they are able to access Dr. DiSilvestro in a timely manner and are better prepared to meet with him through the information provided at their initial clinic visit.

“Currently, the program is only dealing with issues of the forefoot such as bunions, toe deformities, arthritis in the toes and Morton’s Neuroma, (nerve issue in the ball of the foot) as well as foot cysts or fibromas as a focused start for our team. We hope to expand the program as we reach milestones and successes, and of course, with the help of appropriate funding.”

Dr. Matthew Di Silvestro and Catherine Lafontaine are the team behind QCH’s new FAST Program, ensuring foot and ankle patients are being assessed promptly and triaged correctly.