

Fractured hips a priority at Juravinski



Juravinski hospital. since 2009 the provincial Ministry of Health has mandated that seniors with fractured hips be treated within 48-hours of reporting the injury. One of the operating rooms at the Juravinski hospital is set aside at 3 p.m. each day for repairing fractured hips. Cathie Coward/The Hamilton Spectator Source: The Hamilton Spectator

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When Marie Bonnett fell and broke her left hip and leg outside a grocery store in early December she didn't hesitate to have surgery right away.

Within 48-hours the senior was on the operating table at the Juravinski hospital which specializes in orthopedic procedures.

She even told the doctors to do all they can to keep her alive in the event of complications.

"I said 'I'm not ready to go yet'," smiled the still spry 91-year-old Hamilton resident.

A day or two after the surgery Marie was up and around with the help of a walker.

She was later moved to the hospital's rehabilitation unit with the hope of returning to her north-end apartment in the coming days.

The mother of 12, grandmother of 21 and great-grandmother of 31 encourages other seniors who suffer a fall to seek medical attention, even if they don't feel seriously hurt.

"Get it checked right away," she said.

Time was a fall that resulted in a broken hip often meant a death sentence for a senior or the end of independent living.

Not any more.

"Fractured hips are geriatric emergencies," said Heather Pepper, a registered nurse and a clinical manager of the surgical oncology and orthopedic program at the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre. "That's a very urgent thing to look after."

Pepper said that since 2009 the provincial Ministry of Health has mandated that seniors with fractured hips be treated within 48-hours of reporting the injury.

She noted one of the operating rooms at the Juravinski hospital is set aside at 3 p.m. each day for repairing fractured hips.

So far the hospital has managed to get 96 percent of the broken hip cases to surgery within 48 hours.

Their goal is 98 percent.

That's a big change in the way hip fractures were considered when she came to the Mountain hospital six years ago.

"When I first arrived patients were waiting until eight, nine, 10 o'clock at night," Pepper recalled. "They had nothing to eat since midnight the night before and that also contributed to the mortality."

Just as important as getting surgery right away is for seniors who have suffered a fall to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

"We actually see some folks come in who've been home for a week or more and what's happened is they've had a trip or fall but (the hip) has not been displaced," said Pepper, who noted a fractured hip that has not come apart will eventually become displaced once it is walked on regularly.

She urges seniors who slip and fall on ice or take a tumble in their homes not to put off having it checked out.

"The classic sign of a broken hip is a short and rotated leg," Pepper said. "If they've fallen and their hip feels sore, they need to come in to the (emergency room) and get an x-ray."

Having surgery as soon as possible following the fracture tends to result in a faster recovery time and fewer complications like post operative delirium where the patient is confused, disoriented or even angry.

In most cases patients spend about five days in a post-surgical ward at the hospital where they are encouraged to sit up and try to get around a little with the help of a walker before they are moved to a rehabilitation ward and then home if all goes well.

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