



MANITOBA INSTITUTE
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Make It Personal: Interview Series

May 6, 2020

An Interview with Dr. Elizabeth Rhynold

Elizabeth Rhynold is a physician specializing in geriatric medicine in Prairie Mountain Health region. She loves that her role includes direct clinical care as well as being an educator. Regardless of who you are – from an experienced health care professional, to a member the public, Elizabeth enjoys sharing ideas of how you can enhance patient safety in the care of older adults.



Making sure the benefits outweigh the risks

For Elizabeth, patient safety is about remembering the physician's oath to "do no harm" by making sure both the benefits and risks of medical treatments are being thoroughly considered. Elizabeth explains, "Often as health professionals, we emphasize the benefits of treatments because we want to help ease people's discomfort and help them get better. But we need to make sure we also highlight the potential side effects." An example she provides is sleeping pills. Over the years, health professionals have gotten into the habit of prescribing sleeping pills when people ask for help falling or staying asleep, "but now we know these sleeping pills can have side-effects and aren't effective when they are taken every night. So, a health professional needs to be aware of all of this information when talking to patients about sleep in order to avoid harm."

Taking time enhances safety

When Elizabeth is working with patients, she avoids patient harm by doing comprehensive assessments. "As a geriatric medicine specialist, I have the privilege of being able to take a lot of time in my clinical visits. I get into the details of how people are feeling and functioning. Going on home visits gives me the opportunity to see how people are managing day-to-day – how they are taking their medication, and if they are taking over-the-counter medication, for example." Taking this time and asking a lot of questions is important to Elizabeth, because patient safety is strengthened by looking at all the contributing factors and not missing something. She believes other health care providers can provide this type of comprehensive care over a series of interactions or visits.



102-175 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3H9



mips.ca
safetoask.ca



204-927-6477
1-866-927-6477



Find us on Facebook,
Twitter & YouTube

Taking a proactive approach to care

Elizabeth has many patients who are considered frail. Frailty is a word that describes someone who has poor function or health because of multiple challenges that may relate to their physical, emotional, cognitive and/or social health. Elizabeth teaches health care professionals the importance of identifying those that are frail and taking a proactive approach with them. “So if someone that is considered frail comes to the emergency department, we know they are going to need more attention to things that will improve their safety, like making sure they are getting enough to drink, that we are not starting a sleeping pill, that we are attending to lighting and noise level, that they get help to go to the bathroom frequently to not lose muscle strength. So, identifying people as frail and then actively offering them enhanced frailty care as a preventative measure is a culture change I am excited to see happening in our region.”

Reducing risk by staying healthy

Elizabeth wants the public to know there is a lot they can do to enhance their health. Elizabeth says, “Young adults, people in their 40’s, 50’s, 60’s can do a lot to reduce their risk of frailty in later life. The Fountain of Health initiative (<http://www.fountainofhealth.ca/>) can help you set and achieve goals in your physical, emotional, cognitive and mental health at any age.”

When I was interviewing Elizabeth, she talked about how excited she was to be speaking to high school students for the first time that week. This enthusiasm she had for sharing knowledge with a new audience really captures how regardless of who you are, what age you are, or what you do, Elizabeth has a message of patient safety for you!

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality healthcare in Manitoba.

Written by Cara Brown, MIPS Volunteer and Assistant Professor, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Rehabilitation Sciences