

This warmer burst of weather is getting us excited about Spring. Some people, however, are not looking forward to the change in season. Spring brings pollen and dust, making it a difficult time for allergy sufferers and even worse for those with Asthma. Luckily, the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital has Respiratory Therapists on staff for these patients.

Respiratory Therapists work with health care team members in diagnosing, treating, educating and promoting wellness in patients who suffer from cardio-respiratory disease and related disorders. There is a total of 16 staff members in the Respiratory Department dispersed throughout the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. Their main office is on the fourth floor, just before the Pediatrics Department. Diagnostic testing such as cardiac stress tests, pulmonary function tests, pace maker checks and home oxygen assessments all take place at this location. The Respiratory outpatient department operates Monday to Friday, eight am to four pm and treats approximately 400 patients per month. They will soon be moving to the new second-floor outpatient clinic area.

Respiratory Therapists participate in every emergency, trauma, critically ill patient or poor oxygen situation. You will find them in departments such as Intensive Care, Emergency, Surgical departments, Neo-Natal Intensive Care and even the Labor and Delivery room. These professionals are active in every department and work around the clock. Often, patients may not even meet their Respiratory Therapist because they work at such critical moments. In a busy month, they can see as many as 3,600 patients. They work hard to keep us breathing comfortably.

As you can imagine, Respiratory Therapy is not an easy department to work in. They are expected to uphold and maintain a Physical Demand statement. Not only are they instrumental in keeping patients alive and breathing, but they also have extensive equipment knowledge.

Respiratory Therapists have lots of equipment that perform a variety of tasks, everything from providing additional oxygen to completely breathing for the patient. Between patient treatments, they clean and maintain the equipment as best they can, but Bio- Medical also helps them when needed.

Respiratory Therapists are a big part of our healthcare team and are often forgotten. A big thank you to our Respiratory Therapists for all you do for the health of our Community!

Heather Bach is the executive director of the Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation. The Health Foundation supports all AHS-related equipment and programs within Medicine Hat and area. If you would like to support any of the current needs, please call the Health Foundation at 403 528 8133 or visit www.myhealthfoundation.ca