

Prostate clinic cuts waits

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Byline: Lori Fazari

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Doug Driediger unravels a stack of small square canvases, one for each day in November.

For the past year, he's painted the view outside his front window, but that month's work stands out.

For six days in November, his view was out the window of Rockyview hospital at Glenmore Reservoir as he recovered from prostate surgery.

That month, Driediger, 47, was to have his first appointment with a urologist after blood tests conducted by his family doctor showed concern.

But through a new prostate cancer clinic introduced last September at the Prostate Cancer Institute, Driediger was seen, diagnosed and treated in less time than it would have taken to book that first appointment.

"This thing's growing in me. I don't want to wait until late November to see a doctor," Driediger recalls thinking. "Cancer's a massive word to have to live with."

Under the new program, the city's 13 urologists each spend about one day a month seeing patients referred from their family doctors. Patients see whomever is on duty instead of waiting longer to see a specific specialist.

The initiative has shortened the wait to see a specialist from up to three months to one week.

"It has prioritized those patients we feel there's a suspicion for prostate cancer," said urologist Dr. Bryan Donnelly.

The clinic has seen an average 100 patients a month since opening.

"Our goal is we can make a difference in the publicly funded system," said Tracy Wasylak, vice-president of the Calgary Health Region's southwest community portfolio.