

Career opportunities are plentiful in Diagnostic Imaging

by Patricia Roy



Paul Young, Manager of Diagnostic Imaging at Prince County Hospital in Summerside.

The Diagnostic Imaging department of a hospital is not the X-ray department of years gone by. It is now a highly technical area with a variety of specialities that are very much in demand.

About **120** people work in Diagnostic Imaging departments across the province. **Thirty** are employed at Prince County Hospital, about **70** work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and the rest are employed at community hospitals across the Island or in provincial roles.

At some of the community hospitals, many of the staff are cross-trained to work in the laboratory and perform ECGs. These staff members work at the X-ray departments of the Community Hospital in O'Leary, the Western Hospital in Alberton, the Stewart Memorial Hospital in Tyne Valley, the Kings County Memorial Hospital, and the Souris Hospital.

Diagnostic Imaging at Prince County Hospital has four departments:

- CT (Computerized Tomography)
- General X-ray
- Ultrasound
- Mammography.

The QEH, in addition to these areas, also has:

- Nuclear Medicine
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)
- BMD (Bone Densitometry)
- Echocardiography, which has a satellite service at PCH and KCMH.

"It takes a lot of people working alongside technologists to run a busy department," says **Paul Young**, Manager of Diagnostic Imaging Services at Prince County Hospital in Summerside.

"We have an amazing group of staff, including X-ray attendants, clerical staff including, but not limited to, transcriptionists and schedulers, porters and technicians who service the equipment.

There are also a number of provincial staff members who play an integral role in DI, such as the Medical Physicist, our Quality Team, as well as DI Systems and Applications Support Managers."

Who uses the services?

Paul says almost every Islander at some point will use the services of this department. "A Physician will place an order requesting a specific exam based on the clinical history of the patient. The exam is then performed by the technologist, and a radiologist will interpret the images and provide a report," Paul explains.

Education

UPEI, in conjunction with Diagnostic Imaging and the Department of Health, offers a four-year **Bachelor of Applied Science in Radiography**. Six students are admitted to the program per year.

"After completing the Radiography program, there are many opportunities to sub-specialize in DI areas such as CT or Mammography," he says. "A technologist can also specialize in MRI, but must travel outside the Maritimes to study this discipline.

"Nuclear Medicine and Ultrasound are degree programs which are offered through Dalhousie University."

A typical workday in Diagnostic Imaging

In the general X-ray department for example, one of the first jobs of a technologist may be to perform quality control testing on the equipment to be sure it meets the radiation safety code and will produce the highest quality images.

"Once those tests are complete, technologists interact with a variety of patients throughout the day. They would be imaging out-patients and patients admitted in the hospital.

"At any given time, they could be dealing with emergency/trauma cases as a result of a vehicle accident or be called to the operating room to take X-rays," Paul says. "There is such a variety of procedures and exams that these technologists are trained to perform, and their skills and expertise are definitely invaluable to this department."

Retirements

"A significant number of the DI department's technical staff across the Island will be eligible for retirement within the next five to 10 years," says Paul.

What high school students need to know

"Through events such as the Health Career Expo held at both ends of the Island in March, we try to make high school students aware of how important science courses are to their future career plans in all areas of medicine.

"I anticipate there may be many employment opportunities available over the next four to five years, which is about how long the training takes.

"To get a feel for what it is like to work in a hospital, try volunteering. This experience offers a view of the variety of healthcare careers they may not have thought about," says Paul.

"Through a provincial program called **Health Care Futures**, students who are accepted to the program work for eight to 12 weeks during the summer months in a specific area of healthcare. We try to take in at least one student every summer who has expressed an interest in pursuing a career in Diagnostic Imaging."

Job shadowing

This year, the Prince County Hospital DI teamed with **Kensington High School's Cooperative Education** program. This partnership will give students the opportunity to get some exposure to a potential career in Diagnostic Imaging.

"We also accommodate other high school students interested in job shadowing, as we feel this is such a valuable experience for these kids.

"We are happy to arrange for those interested to spend a few hours with us to find out about a career in Diagnostic Imaging."