



## NEWS RELEASE

**NHH Obstetrical/Gynecological services growing to meet local need**  
***Minimally invasive laparoscopic surgeries now being performed with arrival of***  
***new expertise, equipment - births also on the rise***

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018** – Almost a year and a half after welcoming a third Obstetrician/Gynecologist to the team, Northumberland Hills Hospital is already seeing evidence of the positive impact.

**Dr. Nasser Abu Awad** arrived in the fall of 2016, bringing additional local capacity for pregnancy care, delivery and infertility expertise as well as new expertise in minimally invasive laparoscopic gynecological surgery, a service not previously offered at NHH.

Dr. Abu Awad joined Dr. Michael Green and Dr. Asiya Hameed, bringing to three the number of Obstetrician/Gynecologists active at NHH.

Supported by the Obstetrician/Gynecologists as well as family physicians and a growing network of local midwives, more women are seeking to deliver in NHH's comfortable, family-friendly birthing suite. Births are on track to increase again this fiscal year, building further on the increase recorded last year at March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Births have increased steadily at NHH from 495 in 2015/16, to 540 in 2016/17 with 552 anticipated by the end of the current fiscal year on March 31, 2018.

Both **Dr. Abu Awad** and **Dr. Asiya Hameed** accept new obstetrical patients on a self-referral basis. Both now operate offices on site at NHH, conveniently located adjacent to the NHH Birthing Suite and other hospital-based supports. "We recommend patients reach out to us at any time in their pregnancy or before for an initial consultation, and no later than 20 weeks; the sooner the better," said Dr. Abu Awad. Obstetrical patients may self-refer to Dr. Abu Awad directly by calling his office at 905-377-7764; self-referrals to Dr. Asiya Hameed are asked to call 905-377-7796.

Minimally invasive gynecological surgeries have also advanced at NHH, with multiple benefits.

Hysterectomies involve surgery to the uterus due to complications in a woman's reproductive system. While traditionally performed at NHH through either open (abdominal) or vaginal procedures, the preferred method, when medically permitted, is through a laparoscopic technique or, essentially, through a scope.

Where no laparoscopic hysterectomies were performed locally in 2016/17, the current 2017/18 fiscal year has seen 17 hysterectomies (or 28 percent of all hysterectomies

performed at NHH this year) performed laparoscopically by Dr. Abu Awad, with February and March data still to report.

Minimally invasive surgery offers benefits to both the patient and the system. Patient benefits include less pain, reduced risk of complications, such as infection or blood clots, faster recovery and minimal cosmetic impact (smaller incisions). From a hospital and health-system perspective, minimally invasive surgeries require shorter lengths of stay which, in turn, free up much needed acute care bed capacity for other patients' needs.

Donations from local residents, collected through the efforts of the NHH Foundation, supported the hospital's purchase of the necessary equipment to introduce the laparoscopic service. The data emerging in the past year provide strong evidence of the positive system impact. The actual length of stay for laparoscopic hysterectomies is one day—almost one-third the length of stay for those who received open or vaginal hysterectomies in the same period.

Gynecological consultations with an NHH Obstetrician/Gynecologist are coordinated through one's primary care provider (usually a family doctor or nurse practitioner but also, in the case of prenatal care, through a midwife).

"If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to talk with your primary care provider and, if appropriate, request a referral. Again, as in the case of pregnancy care, the earlier a conversation is started, the better," said Dr. Hameed.

"Patients in our community have the benefit of local access to specialized obstetrical and gynecological care, and they are taking advantage of it," said NHH Chief of Staff Dr. Mukesh Bhargava. "This is a key component of NHH's strategic commitment to high quality care close to home, and we are very pleased to see the impact of this focus in this past year and a half."

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**About Northumberland Hills Hospital –** Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).