



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

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NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Magnetic Resonance imaging service passes the 1000th patient mark

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, February 8, 2008 – In place in our community for less than four months, Northumberland Hills Hospital's Magnetic Resonance (MR) imaging service has now seen its 1000th patient. Peter Hochu became the pleased recipient of the 1000th test at noon yesterday (Thursday, February 7) when he received a 20-minute MR examination of his right knee.

Born and raised in Port Hope and a resident of Cobourg, this was Mr. Hochu's second MR. The first, received before the local service was in place, required a drive to Newmarket, Ontario. "I was going to a specialist in Richmond Hill at that time, and he referred me to Newmarket," said Mr. Hochu. "This time, I was really pleased to be able to have the examination done close to home."

Asked if he found the procedure difficult, Mr. Hochu laughed. "It's a different sound. Did you see the science fiction movie *Contact*? Remember the sound the scientist [Jodie Foster] picked up from outer space? It sounds like that!"

Of the 1000 MRs performed at NHH to date, the majority have been done—like Mr. Hochu's—on an outpatient basis. "Thirty of our patients so far have been inpatients," said Pamela Knott, MR Charge Technologist, and one of two technologists currently responsible for carrying out the examinations assigned by Dr. Julian Chen, radiologist and Director of MR services at NHH.

"The process for receiving an MR is simple," explained Ms. Knott. "The referring physician sends in a requisition which is reviewed by Dr. Chen. He determines the necessary scans and assigns and prioritizes the examination on a scale of one to four, with one being "emergent/life threatening" and four being non-urgent/elective. Patients are seen in the priority dictated by their condition."

The most common MR procedures completed at NHH to date have been examinations of knees, shoulders, spines and heads. A special focus for the NHH MR service will also be MR breast exams. As of February 7, NHH had performed more than a dozen breast

examinations; this month the MR team will begin using a customized breast examination table. Specially designed for diagnostic breast MR procedures and MR-guided breast biopsies, the table is a key component to emerging MR breast technologies which, says Dr. Chen, are “a unique offering in a community this size.”

Like Pamela Knott and Tim Mills—the technologists on the MR team—Dr. Chen is also new to NHH. Asked to share his own reflections on the past four months, Dr. Chen said: “I’m very impressed with the attention to quality from each member in this unit. Radiologists Paul and Frank Marrocco are highly skilled and we are very fortunate to have the excellent MR technologists we have here today. There are times when we have to add extra patients to an already full workday. This team is always willing to find time. I have worked in larger tertiary centres for over nine years and seen a lot of things. The quality of work performed here is truly excellent.”

NHH is currently operating one MR shift per day, five days a week—the amount permitted under the funding allotment from the Ministry of Health. Patient wait times for MR are currently tracked in Ontario but the NHH service was not included in the provincial registry during its start-up phase. “We will be brought on-line next week,” confirmed Mary Anne Shill, Vice President of Patient Services. “We will retroactively submit our patient wait time information from Day 1 (October 25, 2007) and begin our regular data submissions this month. We’re very grateful for the ministry support we’ve received for this service. The impact of our MR on the provincial wait time is expected to be positive and, we hope, sufficient demonstration for us to earn additional funding for more hours of service.”

The ministry and the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) monitor wait times for MR across the province. Additional funding is granted to hospitals as required.

Though the day-to-day operational funding is now in place, the money to pay for the multi-million dollar MR equipment is not. The Northumberland Hills Hospital Foundation has accepted responsibility to raise the necessary capital funds to pay for the MR equipment and other enhancements necessary to keep NHH’s Diagnostic Imaging and related systems at the leading edge of current technology. Campaign planning is being led by Port Hope resident and Campaign Chair Jan Boycott. Says Ms. Boycott: “A team of volunteers have been meeting with community members and early donations have been received. Further community updates (and appeals!) are coming soon.”

For more information, contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The 137-bed acute care hospital delivers a broad range of core services, including medical/surgical care, complex/long-term care, rehabilitation, palliative care, obstetrical care and intensive care. NHH also sponsors a Community Mental Health Centre and an Assertive Community Treatment Team. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland is comprised of the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs over 500 people and is an active member of the Central East LHIN. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.