



NHH

Northumberland
Hills Hospital

Senior Leadership Report to the Board

Our Shared Purpose: People First

**Our Values: Integrity, Quality, Respect,
Compassion and Teamwork**

December 2024

Connected care close to home

Two thoracic surgeons welcomed to NHH medical team – Referrals for Dr. Daniel Sisson and Dr. Shannon Trainor now accepted

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is pleased to announce the recruitment of two thoracic surgeons, Dr. Daniel Sisson, MD, FRCSC and Dr. Shannon Trainor, MD, FRCSC.

With the support of their two Nurse Navigators, Dr. Sisson and Dr. Trainor—who are based out of Lakeridge Health Oshawa—will support local patients and primary care providers by running a weekly on-site thoracic surgery clinic at NHH. While surgical procedures will continue to be provided out of Lakeridge Health, patients of this new clinic can receive pre-operative, post-operative and follow-up treatment, bringing a significant portion of their care close to home.

Thoracic surgery is a surgical subspecialty that treats diseases related to the chest, including the trachea, esophagus, and stomach. Medical conditions that a thoracic surgeon may treat can include, but are not limited to lung cancer, esophageal cancer, hiatus hernia (esophageal reflux), metastatic disease to the lung, and end-stage lung disease.

“The addition of a thoracic surgery clinic at NHH is a welcomed opportunity to expand specialized services locally,” said President and CEO Susan Walsh. “I am pleased to welcome both Dr. Sisson and Dr. Trainor to NHH and thank them for bringing their expertise and talent, not only to NHH, but the community of west Northumberland County.”

“The recruitment of Dr. Sisson and Dr. Trainor is another step forward in our efforts to create more opportunities for accessible care to be delivered at NHH,” said Dr. Mukesh Bhargava, Chief of Staff. “By enhancing local access to specialities like mental health, rheumatology, neurology, genetics, and now thoracic surgery, I feel like we are advancing our Shared Purpose of People First by reducing barriers, like transportation, and increasing the number of services available here at NHH.”

Dr. Daniel Sisson is an attending physician with the Division of Thoracic Surgery at Lakeridge Health Oshawa. In addition to his work as a thoracic surgeon, Dr. Sisson is also adjunct assistant professor at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

His postgraduate medical training includes a Clinical Fellowship in General Thoracic Surgery at the University Health Network in Toronto, Ontario, a Thoracic Surgery Residency with the University of Toronto, and a General Surgery Residency at Queen's University.

Dr. Sisson also holds a Doctor of Medicine from Queen's University and an Honours Bachelor of Health Sciences from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

"Through our collaborative efforts with the thoracic surgery clinic, Dr. Trainor and I look forward to helping patients receive timely, specialized care without having to travel far," said Dr. Sisson. "Often with patients, the burden of travelling to a much-needed appointment can serve as a deterrent, which has the potential to delay—and in some instances—prevent care. We want to continue working together to address and bridge gaps in care for our patients."

Dr. Trainor completed an Advanced Minimally Invasive Thoracic Surgery Fellowship from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre. Additional qualifications include the completion of a Thoracic Surgery Fellowship with McMaster University, Thoracic Surgery Training from the University of Alberta, a General Surgery Fellowship with Toronto East General, and a General Surgery Residency at the University of Toronto.

She obtained her Doctor of Medicine with honours from the University of Toronto and earned an Honours Bachelor of Science from the University of Prince Edward Island in Biology and Psychology.

"By offering thoracic surgery clinics at NHH, we are fulfilling the hospital's commitment of bringing care close to home," said Dr. Trainor. "On average, I see approximately 20 patients per day at our NHH clinic for pre-operative, post-operative and follow-up consultations. The opportunity to bring another medical specialty to the community helps us eliminate barriers to providing what is often critical and potentially life-saving care."

Health care providers can submit a referral through EPIC or Ocean eReferral to the Thoracic Diagnostic Assessment Program. Physician referrals can also be faxed to 1-877-291-5956.

"Check to protect" - OHT-N partners refresh annual call to action to help minimize spread of respiratory illnesses during holiday season

As the holiday season approaches, and we gather more in interior spaces, the rates of respiratory illness, including [influenza](#) (flu), [respiratory syncytial virus](#)

[\(RSV\)](#), and COVID-19 are anticipated to rise in our region and throughout Ontario.

To minimize the impact of respiratory illness in our region, Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) partners are once again joining forces with a collective ‘call to action’ to help all—patients, caregivers, and providers alike—manage cold and flu season.

The OHT-N call to action—signed by all signatories to the OHT-N—has three simple goals:

- 1) Remind everyone of the steps we can take, as individuals, to minimize our risk of getting sick this season (and inadvertently spreading viruses to others this season);
- 2) Promote additional resources available—beyond primary care offices and the nearest hospital—if we are sick or caring for someone who is sick; and
- 3) Help raise awareness of the rising rates of respiratory illness in our community.

Respiratory disease in Northumberland - What the data are telling us

The Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU)’s [Respiratory Infections Dashboard](#) shares updates on the local rates of respiratory illness, including weekly emergency department visits, hospitalizations and outbreaks including COVID-19, influenza and RSV to support data-driven decisions for community health and well-being.

“Let’s all continue to protect ourselves and our community by staying up to date on our vaccinations, which include influenza, COVID-19 and RSV,” said Dr. Natalie Bocking, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer for the HKPR District Health Unit. “Both COVID-19 and flu vaccines are available at local pharmacies and primary care teams. By doing so, we are ensuring our critical health care services are there for those who need them most.”

Check to protect - Simple steps we can take now to minimize the chances of serious illness and community spread of respiratory illness:

- ✓ Make sure you and your family members’ COVID vaccinations are up to date, meaning you have completed your primary series and, for those 5 years of age and older, you have received a COVID-19 vaccine within the last six months of your last dose or infection. COVID-19 vaccinations can be booked locally through the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District

Health Unit <https://www.hkpr.on.ca/> or call 1-866-888-4577 ext. 1507.

Many pharmacies and some primary care offices continue to offer COVID vaccinations. Learn more about vaccines and where to get vaccinated here: www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-vaccines

- ✓ Get a flu shot. Flu shots are given to those aged 6 months and older. Learn more about where to get a flu shot in Northumberland County on the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit's website [here](#).
- ✓ If you or someone you know is a high-risk older adult (60 and up), get the RSV vaccination. [Click here](#) to learn more about eligibility or contact the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577 ext. 1507.
- ✓ Wear a mask when indoors in crowded public spaces and physical distancing cannot be maintained or if you are feeling unwell – masking is not currently mandatory in most areas of Northumberland County, but it is a small gesture that is known to have a big impact on stopping the spread of germs. Surgical masks should be properly worn, covering the nose and mouth.
- ✓ Screen for respiratory symptoms daily and stay home if you are ill. What feels like a minor cold to you could be serious if transmitted to someone else.
- ✓ Wash your hands often, particularly when out in public. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you have just washed your hands.

What to do if you catch a respiratory illness, or if you are a care provider for someone who is sick

Mild symptoms? Most of us with respiratory symptoms—whether from flu, COVID, RSV or other respiratory infections—will recover on our own and will not require prescription medications. Self-isolate and rest, drink plenty of fluids and take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen as able and as needed and directed on the manufacturer's instructions for fever or muscle aches.

Child with a fever? *Information for families and caregivers on children's fever and pain medication* is a combined effort between the Canadian Paediatric Society, the Canadian Pharmacists Association and four Canadian children's hospitals. It contains helpful information on fevers and the use of over-the-counter medication. [Find it online here](#).

When to see a doctor or Nurse Practitioner? There are special considerations for respiratory illness in children. ***Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms*** is an excellent resource for answering many common questions – including when to call the doctor or NP’s office. [Find it online here.](#) A virtual appointment may be offered in some instances. This is one-way primary care providers can determine if you need to be seen in person.

When to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department? Emergency Departments (EDs) are very busy places but, in some circumstances, the ED is the only option available for accessing urgent care quickly. Some examples of when you should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department: if you are worried that you or someone you are caring for is seriously ill; if your infant, younger than three months old, has a fever; if your child is struggling to breathe or is breathing faster than normal; if you are concerned about the risk of dehydration.

Be aware of other local options for care, outside of the Emergency Department, and hours of operation

- ✓ Get free telephone access to a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the Telehealth Ontario service at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007)
- ✓ Visit the York Super IDA Pharmacy’s new walk-in clinic located at 500 Division Street, Cobourg, inside York Super Pharmacy. Hours of operation: Monday to Friday from 10:00 AM-3:00 PM. Call (905) 372-7171 for additional information.
- ✓ Visit the Port Hope Walk-in Clinic. To learn more about hours of operation or how to book an appointment, please see: Northumberland.ca/PortHopeClinic
- ✓ For Colborne residents - Contact the Colborne Rural Outreach Clinic - Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (ohtnorthumberland.ca) - open weekdays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM (closed over lunch hour), this clinic offers in-person primary care support from a Nurse Practitioner for those who do not currently have a local primary care provider, or those who may need specific temporary support closer to home
- ✓ Contact a care provider with the East Region Virtual Care Clinic, open seven days a week from 1:00 PM to 9:00 PM. To make an appointment, please visit: <https://www.virtualcareontario.ca/>
- ✓ Check the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Your Health Care Options website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/your-health> for information on these and other health-care services in your area

The best gift we can all give to one another and all health care providers this holiday season is to ensure we take action, where it is in our control, to minimize the risk of contracting a respiratory illness. Prevention, and response, is a shared responsibility.

For the sake of the most vulnerable among us—the very young, older individuals, and those whose health is already challenged by chronic health conditions, precarious housing situations or both—we must each continue to do everything in our power to protect our whole community by preserving health care resources for those who need them most.

Find this and more information on the OHT-N website, OHTNorthumberland.ca.

Accountable Care

Northumberland Hills Hospital Laboratory receives 99 percent score on recent Accreditation Canada Diagnostics assessment

The Laboratory at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) met 99 per cent of the required standards set out in a recent Accreditation Canada Diagnostics (ACDx) assessment, improving even further on the 92 per cent achievement earned by the Lab in its last assessment in 2020.

The success of NHH's ACDx assessment is a welcomed result that complements the hospital's own Accreditation with Exemplary Standing recognition, which was awarded during an organization-wide accreditation in 2022.

Mandated by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and operated by Accreditation Canada, the ACDx assessment is required for all licensed medical laboratories in Ontario. It is also a condition of maintaining the hospital's laboratory license through the Ministry of Health.

Conducted on a 4-year cycle, the accreditation process is a 3-day assessment, in which assessors attend the laboratory to go through applicable requirements.

A formal report is then issued to the recipient facility following the accreditation assessment visit, and an action plan to address any non-conformances must be formulated within 90 days. Once the action plan has

been returned to ACDx, a panel determines if the laboratory meets the criteria for an accreditation certificate.

NHH's Laboratory was assessed against 423 requirements, with several hundred sub-requirements per discipline, including quality, management, and health and safety requirements.

"Accreditation is a rigorous process that ensures we are held to the same standards as every other laboratory in Canada," said Dr. Katie O'Reilly, Medical Director, Laboratory Services. "Every assessment that is measured during accreditation allows our team to review current processes, while making sure that we not only meet, but exceed the high-quality of patient care and standards set by our Laboratory Department. This exceptional result is a testament to the commitment and dedication of our Lab team."

"We are incredibly proud of our NHH Lab team for obtaining a remarkable result on their recent ACDx assessment," said Susan Walsh, President and CEO. "Our Lab committed themselves to learning from our 2020 accreditation results and found ways to improve—and in doing so—achieve a near-perfect score during this most recent assessment. The intensive preparation process leading up to accreditation helped our team embrace a culture of continuous quality improvement and an internal audit system that has set the department up for future success."

NHH's Laboratory consists of several disciplines, including Transfusion Medicine, Haematology, Chemistry, and Point-of-Care, each of which has of their own set of requirements.

The NHH Lab employs 15 medical laboratory technologists, 15 medical laboratory technicians, 1 charge medical laboratory technologist, 1 transfusion safety officer, 1 laboratory medical director, 1 transfusion medicine physician, and 2 laboratory clerical staff, including 1 manager and 1 program director.

Operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the Lab performs a wide range of tests for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment.

NHH Laboratory representatives invited to Queen's Park

Thank you to Michelle Hoad, CEO of the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario, for coordinating a recent visit to NHH with Northumberland Peterborough-South MPP David Piccini. The tour provided an opportunity for both to meet members of the team, tour the department

and, conversely, for the team to showcase the highlights from their recent Accreditation and the hard work that goes on behind the scenes in this critical hospital service.

Following the tour, an invitation was extended to Dr. Katie O'Reilly, Medical Director, Laboratory Services and NHH Lab Manager Natalie Goodman to join Minister Piccini and MLPAO representatives for lunch at Queen's Park. The luncheon was held November 27th and provided further opportunity for NHH to discuss a number of provincial priorities for hospital laboratories while, again, showcasing the work of NHH.

PACE Partners host final virtual conversation of the calendar year, "Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care—Not Why, but When."

On Thursday, November 29, the Northumberland PACE partners held their final virtual conversation of the calendar year, 'Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care—Not Why, but When.'

The virtual event—attended by approximately 60 attendees—was led by Dr. Francesco Mulé, Head of Service for NHH's Division of Palliative and Supportive Care and Carolyn Wilson, NHH Clinical Nurse Specialist, Palliative Care. Taryn Rennicks, Executive Director of the Community Health Centres of Northumberland, served as the guest moderator. Watch the PACE webpage, www.pacetalks.com for a recording in the coming days; 2025 talks are being planned and will be promoted as speakers and topics are finalized in the new year.

Responsive and healthy work environment

PFAC Partner David Harnden honoured with Meritorious Service Medal

On November 11, PFAC Partner David Harnden was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) by the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #580 Grafton.

The MSM is considered to be the highest award that can be granted to Ordinary, Associate or Affiliate Voting Members of the Legion.

David—a longstanding Legion member—was recognized for his volunteerism with NHH's Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), Auxiliary (through stroke peer visits to patients and caregivers in NHH's Integrated Stroke Unit), and minor sports clubs.

Congratulations, David!

NHH recognizes Remembrance Day with annual ceremony

Ahead of November 11, NHH welcomed back (Lt(N)) Chris Barker, (Lt(N)) Clide Montgomery and (SLt) Emma Harness to lead the hospital's annual Remembrance Day ceremony for staff, volunteers, inpatients, and visitors.

Hosted in the Inpatient Rehabilitation dining room, a new addition this year was the participation of three local co-op students who shared a history of Remembrance Day and Indigenous Veterans Day, which was recognized on November 8.

Another highlight was the participation of NHH staff member Kelly Cairns who, alongside (SLt) Harness on trumpet, played the bagpipes during the ceremony. A Registered Practical Nurse at NHH, Kelly is also a member of the Peel Regional Police Pipe Band and will be attending the World Pipe Band Championship in Scotland.

Among our patients and guests this year, we were also honoured to have Veteran Bill Conley in attendance with his wife Marilyn.

Thank you to Recreational Therapist, Linda Casimir Davis who organized this special event alongside NHH Public Affairs.

Canadian Patient Safety Week celebrated!

This year, Canadian Patient Safety Week 2024 was celebrated from October 28-November 1 with the theme, 'What comes to mind when you think about healthcare harm? Let's broaden our understanding together.'

Throughout the week, NHH staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers had opportunities to participate in a variety of unique activities to broaden our collective understanding of healthcare harm, together. Activities included an interactive informational display about patient safety and a lunch and learn session.

NHH also welcomed the Colborne Library Ukulele Band - CLUB to NHH's Main Street Bistro for a special performance that reinforced the importance of how mental and spiritual wellness can contribute to patient safety. Feedback from the band was exceptional and we hope to welcome them back soon.

Good Catch Awards are a patient safety initiative presented during Patient

Safety Week that recognize and encourage staff to report patient safety incidents by shining a positive light on reporting. Good Catch Awards also reinforce NHH's safety culture and are part of our employee recognition program.

This year's Good Catch Award winners were Brittany Lowery, Danielle Parker and Sarah Meringer. Their Awareness to Action (ATA) submissions highlighted the importance of:

- Double-checks before medication administration
- Verification of patient allergies and dietary restrictions
- Patient privacy and doublechecks during bedside Transfer of Accountability

Additional congratulations to Bonne Bisset, who won the prize for completing the Professional Practice Postmortem virtual activity.

We thank everyone who took part in our 2024 Canadian Patient Safety Week activities, including sharing safety suggestions, dancing to the ukulele band music in the Bistro and joining in on safety conversations focused on non-physical harm.

At NHH, we strive to create a culture of safety by working together to ensure the highest standards of quality and safe care in delivering exceptional patient care, every time for every person.

Holiday traditions

One of the many lessons learned from the pandemic was the power of small but simple traditions on creating and sustaining a culture of belonging, compassion... and fun.

NHH is proud to be continuing a number of popular holiday season traditions this year, thanks to the help of multiple staff teams.

On Thursday, November 21 the Annual NHH Employees Christmas Craft Sale, organized by NHH's Jackie Hart, returned to the Main Street Bistro, featuring a collection of crafts, artwork and other holiday-friendly gift ideas handmade by staff and volunteers at NHH. Similar to previous years, all proceeds raised through the table rentals at the Craft Show supported Northumberland United Way.

On Saturday, November 30 NHH staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers will carry the NHH banner in two local holiday parades. With support this year from NHH's Community Mental Health staff, the NHH float is set to

participate in the Port Hope and Cobourg parades at 1PM and 6PM respectively.

On Sunday, December 1, over 180 children and grandchildren of NHH staff, physicians and midwives will come together with their parents to enjoy games and treats at the Columbus Centre on Spencer Street in Cobourg. A long-standing tradition expertly organized by NHH's Doris Chin-Brunton and her team of student volunteers, this event is much appreciated by children, parents and grandparents alike. Even Santa himself is expected to make an appearance!

On Thursday, December 12, members of NHH's leadership team will once again serve breakfast to staff, physicians and volunteers in another time-honoured NHH tradition. Generously supported by the General Medical Staff Association, the annual hospital holiday breakfast offers an opportunity for staff to come together as a team and enjoy a small thank you for all they do through the year to make NHH... NHH.

These larger events will be combined with other notable activities coordinated by our Caring for the Carers Committee (including a Gingerbread House Contest, candy canes and hot chocolate and another Kindness Cart), ensuring the season is fully recognized at NHH.

Exceptional care, every time, for every person

Experience measurement expanding at NHH

Experience measurement is a critical component of NHH's commitment to a *People First* culture, where everyone feels valued, heard and supported.

Experience surveys at NHH have traditionally gathered feedback from two key hospital audiences: (1) patients/caregivers and (2) staff/physicians/midwives.

NHH's Experience Measurement Working Group is preparing to launch its latest staff/physician/midwife survey this December. A short survey comprised of 13 questions, the staff and provider survey will be opened for input in early December with results expected to be in hand early in the new year.

As part of our new Experience Framework, NHH also committed this year to introduce its first-ever experience survey for a third key hospital audience: NHH volunteers. A 13-question survey has been co-designed by the Volunteer Experience Sub-Committee and will be issued at the same time as the staff,

physician and midwife survey, with results also expected early in the new year.

Parallel to the above, patient and caregiver surveys are also being refreshed.

NHH's [Interim Patient and Caregiver Experience Survey](#), accessible online on our website and at the point of care throughout the hospital, was introduced several years ago, following a shift in the long-standing vendor for Ontario hospital experience surveys.

Beginning this fiscal year, NHH will expand Patient and Caregiver Experience survey functionality (and awareness) with support from the services of Qualtrics, a recognized leader in experience measurement and the vendor now endorsed by the Ontario Hospital Association.

NHH has signed a contract with Qualtrics offering licensed access to a suite of survey questionnaires co-designed with the Ontario Hospital Association and patient partners. Earlier this fall, the Ontario Hospital Association released details on their plans to re-establish experience survey benchmarking across hospitals. NHH is pleased to be moving forward with the OHA on this important work and looks forward to introducing enhanced experience surveys for selected patient groups in the coming months.

Details will follow in future reports.

Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) recognizes Breast Cancer Awareness Month with historic expansion to mammography referral process

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month—which is observed every October—NHH joined local health care providers in advising eligible Ontarians about an important change to breast cancer screening eligibility.

Effective, Tuesday, October 8, the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) began allowing younger patients—aged 40 to 49—to self-refer for mammograms covered by OHIP without a doctor or nurse practitioner's referral. Previously the age threshold for self-referral to the OBSP was 50. All patients 40-74, inclusive of women, men, Two-Spirit, trans, and nonbinary people with no clinical concerns or a personal history of breast cancer, are welcome to self-refer into the OBSP program.

With this new expansion, it's estimated that an additional one million patients in Ontario can now opt to receive important screenings that are critical in the early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society has projected that 30,500 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2024, representing 25 per cent of all new cancer cases in women this year. Of the estimated 290 Canadian men who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2024, 60 will not survive. 5,500 Canadian women will not survive from breast cancer, which represents 13% of all cancer deaths in women in 2024. While breast cancer cases continue to rise, survival rates are also increasing due to earlier detection.

“Many medical advancements are continuing to be made in the field of cancer research; however, the most effective will always be early detection,” said Dr. Deljit Dhanoa, Department Chief, NHH Diagnostic Imaging Services. “Often with diagnoses, the earlier that we can detect the presence of cancer in a patient, the sooner treatment can begin and potentially increase their chances of survival. By lowering the age for breast cancer screenings, the OBSP is reinforcing the value and importance of early detection, which has the potential to save many lives.”

The Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) now recommends that:

- Most people aged 40 to 74 who are eligible for the OBSP get screened either annually or biannually depending on a range of factors, including a patient’s breast density and a family history of breast cancer.
- People ages 30 to 69 who meet the high-risk OBSP eligibility criteria get checked once annually with both a mammogram and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or screening breast ultrasound if MRI is not medically appropriate. A referral to a high-risk OBSP centre for genetic counselling is required beforehand.
- Individuals between 70 to 74 who are already in the high-risk OBSP get checked annually with a mammogram through the program.

Individuals under 40 and over 74, or patients with symptoms or a personal history of breast cancer, continue to require a physician or nurse practitioner referral for a mammogram. For those between 40 to 74, no referral is required, however mammogram screenings must occur 365 days apart—unless an individual has clinical symptoms—to be covered by OHIP.

“NHH’s Diagnostic Imaging (DI) Department is accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR), offering OBSP screening as well as being an OBSP assessment site,” said Ken Graham, Manager, Diagnostic Imaging. “We are staffed by a team of skilled radiologists, medical radiation technologists specialized in mammography, ultrasound technologists and a breast health clinical navigator, who use state-of-the-art-equipment—including our fully digital mammography units—to ensure patients have access to critical, potentially life-saving screenings and tests, right here in our community.”

Learn more about the Ontario Breast Screening Program by visiting <https://www.ontario.ca/page/breast-cancer-testing-and-prevention> or call 905-377-7795 to book an appointment with NHH's OBS Prevention Centre.