



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

Senior Management Report to the Board February 2021

Quality and Safety

OHT-N partners working with HKPR District Health Unit to begin local vaccine rollout following arrival of first 700 doses in region on January 25

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) shared “A Dose of Good News” in [a January 25 news release confirming that the first local allocation of COVID-19 vaccine had been received](#). As highlighted in a recent joint news release with the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland, HKPRDHU has been working with Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) and all area health care partners to ensure that plans were in place, and ready to be implemented, once the vaccine was received, and this planning will prove very beneficial in the days ahead.

The province is guiding the distribution of the vaccines as they become available in Ontario through the federal procurement process and has developed a phased approach for the rollout.

Ontario is currently in the first phase, with residents and staff of long-term care and retirement homes identified as the first priority population to be immunized. The [province announced on January 25](#) that it was aiming to have all residents of long-term care and high-risk retirement homes vaccinated by February 5, 2021. This date was revised to February 10 [in a news release from the Premier’s Office on February 2](#). Depending on vaccine availability, health care workers, including staff and physicians at local hospitals with patient-facing responsibilities, would be immunized next. Vaccination of these priority groups has already been underway in areas of the province that have seen the highest number of cases.

“The Ontario Health Team of Northumberland thanks the Health Unit for the hard work that has gone in to advocating for our region, and stands ready to support this priority work in any way needed,” said Linda Davis, spokesperson for the team. “We can assist with storage of the vaccine, vaccination blitzes to vulnerable populations in long-term care, retirement and congregate living facilities and, with municipal partners, the broader community rollout—whatever is needed, we will support. The only limiting factor right now is the number of available doses, and this is out of our control. We were extremely pleased to receive the Health Unit’s news that 700 doses of the Moderna vaccine were received yesterday. While we appreciate some parts of Ontario have been much harder hit than Northumberland, we cannot emphasize strongly enough how important it is that we too continue to see vaccine flow into this community and all the communities served by the HKPRDHU to ensure we can avoid COVID-19 cases continuing to rise. Until then, as urged in previous appeals from the OHT-N, the best means of protection is the prevention measures we have all been taking: maintaining physical distancing, wearing a mask, practicing good hand hygiene, staying home when we are ill and getting tested if symptoms do appear.”

HKPRDHU currently anticipates that additional doses of the vaccine will be available in the spring or early summer and the province will move into the second phase of roll-out at that time: expanding to other target populations that it has identified, including essential workers, older adults, and at-risk populations. The third phase of the vaccine distribution plan is expected to start in the summer and will include vaccinating the rest of the population who want to receive the vaccine.

For further details distributed in the joint HJKPRDHU/OHT-N news release, please see the OHT-N and NHH websites: www.ohnorthumberland.ca and www.nhh.ca

NHH conducting internal consultation with staff/physicians on proposed vaccine prioritization strategy in anticipation of ongoing supply challenges

Vaccine supply is expected to remain limited in Canada for some months. Per the province's [recently revised distribution strategy](#), the HKPRDHU's immediate priority is to vaccinate all long-term care and high-risk retirement homes in Ontario. This is now under way in our region and the province's current goal for completion of this (updated February 2) is February 10, 2021.

Though the exact timing for the arrival of the first vaccine at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) has not been confirmed, some critical steps in NHH's pre-planning process have now been completed. The goal is to offer a vaccine to as many employees and credentialed professional staff as possible, in as short a timeframe as vaccine supply will permit.

In an update emailed to staff and physicians this week, NHH:

- shared for awareness and feedback the proposed NHH COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Matrix that will guide internal distribution;
- explained the process for developing the Prioritization Matrix;
- invited staff to a special COVID-19 Virtual Forum (held February 2), to receive input and answer questions; and
- share expected next steps.

How decision-making around prioritization has been developed at NHH

NHH has approximately 700 employees, and 150 credentialed professional staff (physicians and midwives). A **Vaccine Planning Steering Committee**, with multidisciplinary representation from staff and physicians, as well as senior leadership, has set out the steps necessary to ensure the hospital is ready to get needles into arms as soon as the first allotment of vaccine arrives on site for our use.

As part of this work, a **Vaccine Prioritization Sub-Committee**—also with representation from across the hospital (clinical and non-clinical)—completed a draft Prioritization Matrix, listing NHH staff and credentialed professional staff eligible for vaccination in Priority Group 1 and those who will be next in line, in Priority Groups 2 and 3.

While the ideal would be to receive enough vaccine to offer it to everyone immediately, ongoing supply challenges in Canada indicate that the vaccine will likely be delivered to us in stages. The Prioritization Matrix will ensure the vaccine goes to those who need it most first, by following the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health (these include an ethical framework and detailed scoring risk [matrix](#)) to pre-determine the order in which NHH team members will be offered the vaccine. The process behind the proposed Matrix below took into account the risk COVID-19 poses to an individual and team as well as the team or individual's 'criticality' to our hospital's day-to-day functioning. Recognizing the importance of consistency, a prioritization tool was also created and consistently applied across all hospitals within our C5 region. NHH's own Ethical Decision-Making Framework has also guided our NHH decision-making process for vaccine prioritization—namely, the key feature of transparency—and the prioritized groups were vetted through the Vaccine Planning Steering Committee and the Occupational Health & Safety Committee before going to all staff and credentialed professionals for final review and input.

Next steps

Following the Virtual Forum, a further two days (February 3 and 4) will be provided for review and input on the proposed Prioritization Matrix.

On Friday, February 5 the Vaccine Implementation Committee will finalize the Prioritization Matrix and the related documents and NHH hopes to be in a position to invite Expressions of Interest to all staff and credentialed professionals the week of February 8.

Great Place to Work and Volunteer

Recent recruitment efforts for NHH medical team expand existing physician complement and bring new specialist care close to home for Northumberland residents

NHH is pleased to announce the addition of six new specialists to its growing medical team. The most recent specialists recruited to NHH are as follows:

Dr. Sandra Demaries, Psychiatrist
Dr. Philippe Rizek, Neurologist
Dr. Rishi Narine, Radiologist
Dr. El-Zabet, Anesthesiology
Dr. Katie O'Reilly, Pathologist
Dr. Hetal Talati, Pathologist

"We are very pleased to formally welcome all six of these physicians to NHH and Northumberland," said Dr. Mukesh Bhargava, Chief of Staff. "Our recruitment focus in the past year has been aimed at ensuring local patients have access to the clinical services they need, such as neurology and psychiatric services specialized in geriatrics, closer to home. We have also had success expanding our existing complement of radiology and anesthesiology expertise – recruitments that will further strengthen our diagnostic imaging and surgical services. And, following the recent retirement of Dr. Allison Collins from her role as Medical Director, Pathology, we are now welcoming her successors. It's my pleasure to share the names of all six of these skilled individuals and formally welcome the newest members to NHH's medical team."

"NHH extends a very heart-felt thank you to Dr. Collins for her many years of distinguished service," said Dr. Bhargava. "Her friends and colleagues in the NHH Laboratory and the entire hospital wish Dr. Collins the very best as she begins this next chapter and we look forward to continuing to work with her in an ad hoc capacity on various projects in the months ahead."

Dr. Sandra Demaries – Psychiatrist – Originally from Montreal, Dr. Demaries completed her medical training at the University of Toronto and McGill. She recently relocated with her family to Ontario following several years of practice in Edmonton. She brings with her a skill set that is in high demand across the country. Trained as a General Psychiatrist, Dr. Demaries also holds a sub-specialty in Geriatric Psychiatry (one of three psychiatric sub-specialties recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons) and has committed most of her career to helping older adults. Here in Northumberland, Dr. Demaries will serve in two capacities: as an in-patient consultant at NHH—available on an as-needed basis to see patients presenting with psychiatric symptoms identified through the course of their in-patient stay in hospital, as well as those dealing with the challenges of dementia, Alzheimer's and other cognitive-type conditions—and in the community, as a member of the Northumberland Community Mental Health Services team. Her practice will augment the services offered today through NHH's community-based program while working in close collaboration with community physicians and service partners, such as the Geriatric Assessment and Intervention Networks in Port Hope and Campbellford, maximizing accessibility to psychiatry for those most in need.

Dr. Philippe Rizek – Neurologist – Dr. Rizek is a well-respected and accomplished Staff Neurologist at Credit Valley Hospital (Trillium Health Partners) and North York General Hospital. Widely published across a range of peer-reviewed publications, Dr. Rizek runs a private clinic in Mississauga and, through personal connections to the Northumberland region, is now bringing his specialized expertise to patients at NHH thanks to opportunities presented by virtual care technology. Working through a unique 'hosted' Ontario Telemedicine Network model, Dr. Rizek sees local referrals every other Monday with the support of NHH's Telemedicine Coordinator, Registered Nurse Rebecca Rutherford, supporting local physicians and specialists by providing virtual neurological consultations for a range of movement disorders, including Parkinson's, Huntington Disease.

Dr. Rishi Narine – Radiologist – A graduate of the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario, Dr. Narine began his career as a family physician. He subsequently completed a radiology residency through University Health Network, Toronto including, most recently, a fellowship in abdominal imaging through the University of Ottawa. Recruited to Northumberland Radiology, the team of Radiologists behind NHH's respected

Diagnostic Imaging service, Dr. Narine becomes the sixth Radiologist offering care at NHH, further increasing the depth and breadth of services available to the community we serve.

Dr. Ajda El-Zabet – Dr. El-Zabet graduated from the University of Ottawa medical school and completed residencies in Family Medicine and Anesthesia Medicine at Memorial University, Newfoundland, and Northern Ontario School of Medicine, respectively. A member of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada, Dr. El-Zabet was introduced to NHH in the fall of 2015, when she was granted LOCUM (temporary) privileges. NHH is pleased to welcome Dr. El-Zabet as a full-time member of the NHH anesthesia team.

Dr. Katie O'Reilly - Dr. O'Reilly graduated from the Louisiana State University School of Medicine (New Orleans) and completed her Pathology residency at Emory University Department of Pathology (Atlanta, Georgia) and fellowships in surgical pathology and cytopathology from the Stanford University Department of Pathology (Stanford, CA). Dr. O'Reilly has multiple publications and holds several professional affiliations. She is currently the Regional Medical Director overseeing Laboratory Service at Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Campbellford Memorial Hospital, Ross Memorial Hospital, and now NHH. A highly respected expert in her field, the hospital is pleased to welcome Dr. O'Reilly in this medical leadership role.

Dr. Hetal Talati – Dr. Talati completed both her Bachelor of Medical and Bachelor of Surgery degree (MBBS) and her Doctor of Medicine (Pathology, Diploma in Clinical Pathology) from the B.J. Medical College (India). She continued her studies in Canada at the Michener Institute for Applied Health Science (Toronto) and at McMaster University (Hamilton) where she completed her post-graduate residency training in General Pathology. Dr. Talati has a passion for cytology and transfusion medicine and holds multiple professional affiliation memberships, awards and academic achievements. She is also a member of the team at Peterborough Regional Health Centre (for the past 8 years) and in addition to her role as anatomical pathologist at PRHC she is the medical lead for transfusion medicine, hematology and point of care testing. A highly respected expert in her field, NHH welcomes Dr. Talati to NHH.

Call for Interest - NHH Patient Family and Advisory Council volunteers

With some exceptions, on-site volunteer activity has been paused at NHH for much of the pandemic, as a safety precaution and—in Wave 1—as a means of preserving precious personal protective equipment.

It goes without saying that volunteers are sorely missed throughout the hospital and the team looks forward to the day when the NHH Auxiliary, Board and other committee volunteers with the NHH Foundation and Hospital Board, spiritual care volunteers, St John Therapy Dog volunteers and Patient and Family Advisors can be welcomed back on site, in person.

Until then, remote opportunities are being leveraged as much as possible. Among those was the latest quarterly meeting of the NHH Patient and Family Advisory Council, held via Zoom on January 13.

At this meeting the team discussed the ongoing need to fill a vacancy in the medical program. More recently, a new PFAC vacancy has emerged, in the Intensive Care Unit. PFAC volunteers assigned to other programs will continue to work to fill these gaps where time permits, but new recruits are most welcome to support ongoing need for patient and caregiver experience in the areas of medical/surgical care, intensive care, and maternal child care.

If you or someone you know has experience with NHH as a patient or caregiver in one or more of these areas, and has an interest in joining the team (virtually, for now) as a Patient and Family Advisor, please find additional background on the role of PFAC on the NHH website, including role description, term of reference and Expression of Interest form, or reach out directly to the team care of Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, jgillard@nhh.ca or 905-377-7757.

Thank you to our community for the continued support!

If you don't yet follow [the Northumberland Hills Hospital Facebook page](#), please pay us a visit. Two recent videos have been posted, highlighting lovely surprises of community support welcomed by our team last week.

The first came care of Karen Russell's Grade 2 class at Baltimore Public School: a fantastic video produced by the students to say thank you to the front-line health care workers in their community.

The second, also a tribute to front-line workers, with a timely tie-in to Bell Let's Talk Day, recognized this year on January 28, was from the crew of the Royal Canadian Air Force CH-146 Griffon who treated NHH to a rare flypast. The RCAF CH-146 Griffon helicopter from 424 Transport and Rescue Squadron, based at 8 Wing/CFB Trenton, flew over multiple hospitals in our area on January 28 to "show 8 Wing's continued support for the communities' frontline health care workers." The date was chosen to coincide with Bell Let's Talk Day, and the theme this year was very appropriate to CH-146's show of support in the skies above NHH: "When it comes to mental health - now more than ever - every action counts." Thank you, CH-146!

Collaborative Community Partnerships

Virtual remote monitoring and management of COVID-19 patients in the community now available, thanks to cooperative effort

With COVID-positive cases continuing to be confirmed in the region, and the majority of COVID patients recuperating in their homes, a new collaboration has been established to support these individuals, and ensure action can be taken swiftly should additional care be required.

In a direct message to NHH physicians and nurse practitioners late December 2020, NHH Chief of Staff Mukesh Bhargava outlined the virtual remote monitoring option as follows:

"In the outpatient setting, the area of remote monitoring has been explored to monitor patients at home for safe care....In our area, we have two programs available for monitoring patients at home. One is a program from Ontario Health, and the other is the Northumberland Community Paramedicine Program."

Both programs can be accessed by any provider, via a referral. The Ontario Health program involves remote patient monitoring using technology and local resources (like a pulse oximeter) provided to the patient. The Community Paramedicine Program combines both remote monitoring and home visits by paramedics to support individual care. More recently the Central East's Local Health Integration Network nurse-based remote monitoring service has also been incorporated. These programs are all being applied locally in the monitoring of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, and involve 'onboarding' the patient after the referral is received, tracking of vital signs, and recognizing deterioration early. Escalation of care is done by the staff monitoring the patient, at times by escalating and discussing the case with a new local escalation team. If the patient requires emergency medical assistance, that is also arranged.

"The aim of both of these programs is to provide the right care at the right location while monitoring the patient using technology and home visits. These programs are proving useful after initial diagnosis without any emergency room visit or hospitalization. On the other hand, patients may also be referred to the remote monitoring service after discharge from the Emergency Department or following an inpatient hospital stay."

Special thanks to Drs. Erin Pepper, Fraser Cameron and Mark Essak. Together with Dr. Mukesh Bhargava the physicians form the quartet currently serving as the 'escalation team' behind this program, and are working in close collaboration with Northumberland Paramedics Community Paramedicine Program operated by Northumberland County. The cooperative effort between primary care, hospital and community paramedicine has been found successful in other communities in Ontario, and while relatively new is also proving to be a good option for some Northumberland residents as well.

New Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic to open in Northumberland

Northumberland Hills Hospital Community Mental Health Services (NHHCMHS) has partnered with Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) and Four Cast Addiction Services to offer a new Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinic in Northumberland.

Open Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM, the Clinic, located in the NHHCMHS offices on the 2nd floor at 1011 Elgin Street West, is now offering expedited, barrier-free treatment for individuals who are addicted to alcohol or opioids. The team at the RAAM Clinic has experience treating people who are struggling with substance use and understands the difficulties that can be associated with seeking help.

Grounded in a philosophy for treatment and care that is client-centred, trauma informed and without judgement, the RAAM Clinic is designed to offer a healing environment to those seeking help with alcohol or opioid addiction. The RAAM team provides a safe space where clients can get help from a physician, nurse and addiction counsellor. Fast access to medication-assisted therapy is available for both alcohol and opioid use disorders, as well as support or referral for individuals not currently connected to addiction recovery services and resources.

“Services like this have proven very successful in other communities,” said Jennifer Cox, NHH’s Integrated Director, Community Mental Health Services, in the recent media release. “Our primary goal is to help prevent overdoses. This is the aim. A secondary benefit of the RAAM Clinic is a reduction of emergency department visits and hospital stays for people with addictions. We are very pleased to be able to collaborate with our partners PRHC and Four Cast to offer this addition to NHH’s existing community mental health and addiction services. If you need help with substance use, consider reaching out to the RAAM team. We’re here to help.”

Appointment times are now being scheduled in Northumberland. A similar service will also be offered through the same partnership at Haliburton Highlands Health Services in Haliburton County.

To schedule an appointment at the Northumberland site, please call the NHH Community Mental Health Clinic at 905-377-9891. A doctor or nurse practitioner’s referral is not required. Self-referrals to the RAAM Clinic are welcome. For more information on the full range of outpatient services available through NHHCMHS please see the [Patient Care Services section of the hospital’s website](#).

Northumberland PACE talks have returned – Join the PACE partners on Wednesday, February 17 on Zoom for a panel discussion on virtual care

The Northumberland PACE Talk series continues virtually for the 2021 season, with the February session featuring a panel of speakers discussing *Virtual Care*. This virtual PACE Talk will take place through Zoom on **Wednesday, February 17 at 5:30 PM** with speakers Taryn Rennicks, Executive Director of Community Health Centres of Northumberland (CHCN); Simeon Kanev, Privacy Professional with Alliance for Healthier Communities; and Dr. Erin Pepper, a primary-care physician with Northumberland Family Health Team.

Bringing a wide variety of expertise and experience, panelists will be providing an overview of what virtual care is as well as virtual care opportunities available in Northumberland County, exploring privacy and security practices as they relate to virtual care, and sharing the clinician experience in providing care virtually. Moderated by Bill Prawecki, a member of the [Patient and Family Advisory Committee \(PFAC\)](#) at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), this session will also see the unique patient perspective woven throughout with questions and conversation framed to speak to patients and caregivers.

Beginning in 2018, The Northumberland PACE talks have been hosted as free public education sessions on a broad range of health and wellness topics and have consistently drawn large groups of community members with a range of questions and perspectives. Like many other events, The Northumberland PACE Talk series adapted to a new, virtual format as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future topics planned for 2021 include:

- End of life care options in Northumberland
- Advance care planning
- Maintaining our mental health in a global pandemic
- Lifestyle improvements in our control (sleep, physical exercise, etc.)

Lasting an hour in length, each PACE event consists of a 30-minute talk, a 20-minute question-and-answer period with the guest speaker(s) and a 10-minute moderator summary. Virtual PACE Talks will follow this same format.

Bring your questions, your suggestions, and your experience and join in what is expected to be another informative discussion.

Pre-registration is required and space is limited to the first 300 registered attendees. As this event is being hosted through Zoom, attendees will need a Zoom account, internet access, and should plan to login to the event 5 minutes prior to the start. Register for *Virtual Care* at www.pacetalks.com, where you'll also find video and highlights from many of the previous seasons' talks. For those unable to attend, efforts will be made to share a recording of this conversation following the event, technology permitting.

NHH and Friends team formed for Coldest Night of the Year – Walk with us or consider sponsoring!

For the fifth year in a row, NHH physicians, staff and volunteers will be participating in our community's *Coldest Night of the Year* walk, and we need your help!

A fun, family-friendly fundraiser raising money and awareness for hungry, homeless, and hurting people across Canada, the event will look a little different this year, due to COVID, with walkers walking on February 20th or ANY TIME (in the month of February), anywhere, rather than along the previous route through downtown Port Hope. The goal of this annual event is still the same: to join in spirit with what will hopefully be many souls from across the County in support of the street level outreach work of our partners at **Green Wood Coalition**. 'Join' the NHH team and come along with us this month for a solo walk of your own or pledge a donation toward our **NHH and Friends** team goal by visiting our team page on the event website below. Thank you to everyone for supporting this event through your own team or through a donation to a member of ours! And a HUGE thank you to Dr. Anuja Sharma, for leading the way in our fundraising to date!

<https://secure.e2rm.com/registant/TeamFundraisingPage.aspx?teamID=931546&langPref=en-CA>

Operational Excellence

Regional collaboration to support inpatient capacity

Occupancy levels continue high at hospitals across the province, including our own region in the Central East. At the time of writing (February 4, 2021) NHH's occupancy is 107 per cent. In light of the pressures of COVID-19, we have been asked, through Ontario Health's regional Incident Management System, to support the transfer of medical patients from the Greater Toronto Area. Together with several other hospitals in the Central East NHH has accepted this request and, as of February 4, NHH has received a small number of these transfers (less than 5). No critical care (Intensive Care Unit) transfers have been received at NHH at this point, but at present NHH does have critical care capacity should the need arise.

While our first priority will always be to provide access to care to the best of our ability at the local level, we are also prepared to step up to meet requests like this from the broader provincial system should it be required. As a community hospital, NHH regularly transfers patients to larger centres when specialized care is required that we do not offer here in Northumberland and, likewise, we expect that we may also be called upon to accept patient transfers from other areas, if appropriate. From a critical care perspective, the NHH Intensive Care Unit has a total bed capacity for 10 patients today (including the 4 additional funded beds announced for the NHH ICU by MPP David Piccini on December 9). As directed by the province, we have plans in place to surge up—if required—but recognize that this would also require additional staff and physicians to support the patients in these beds, and this is expected to be a challenge.

Health Professions Scholarship applications due this month

Applications for the annual Health Professions Scholarship awards are due by February 15th.

Introduced by the hospital in 2003, the purpose of the Scholarship Program is to provide financial assistance to students from west Northumberland who are pursuing a career in the health care sector. Applicants are evaluated on the basis of their academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, a testimonial explaining their

interest in a health-care field and written references. All applicants must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a full-time study program.

By supporting local students early in their academic studies, NHH hopes to encourage area youth to consider NHH in their career path when the time comes to select an employer.

Due to the global pandemic, the 2020 scholarship awards were postponed last year; NHH encourages students who submitted applications in the 2020 calendar to consider re-submitting for consideration in 2021, when a maximum of 3 awards (\$1,000 each) will be presented at a spring meeting of the Northumberland Hills Hospital's Board of Directors.

Full details, including a downloadable Application Form, are available on the Careers tab of our website at nhh.ca.