

COVID-19 and NHH -

A message to our community from President and CEO Linda Davis

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) staff, physicians and community partners are working very hard to keep ahead of the rapidly evolving situation regarding COVID-19.

While the global pandemic is changing how we operate, NHH continues to provide essential services.

NHH's Incident Command Table, established earlier this month, has been working at high speed, and the collaboration and communication that is occurring across departments, with our Ontario Health Team of Northumberland partners and between hospital and community physicians, is unlike anything we have ever seen.

In recent days, the number of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases on self-isolation in our community has started to rise. This week we have also admitted our first confirmed positive COVID-19 inpatient here at NHH. Many other parts of the world are ahead of us on this unfortunate curve. The NHH team has been very grateful for the past weeks as we learned from those ahead of us, scaling back non-essential services and scaling up for what we expect will be very ill COVID-19 patients in the coming days. As much capacity as possible is being created for COVID-19 patients' acute care needs while ensuring those without the virus can also be cared for and kept safe.

The flood of provincial, national and international information is being monitored by the Incident Command Table to support planning and preparation, and our team is updating processes and procedures as appropriate.

In addition to the process and service changes we announced earlier this month - including visitor restrictions, volunteer restrictions, the opening of the NHH COVID-19 Assessment Centre and a phone-in community mental health walk-in counselling clinic alternative - additional changes implemented at NHH this past week include:

- Active screening for symptoms in all individuals, including staff and physicians, prior to entering the hospital, including temperature readings
- Responded to the release of new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protocols for procedure (surgical) masks following the receipt of new provincial directives from Ontario Health on both March 25 and, most recently, March 30 – as reports of community spread of the virus increased.
- Hands-on training of over 450 staff and physicians to review critical donning and doffing procedures for essential PPE
- Patient care mapping to establish pre-arranged pathways of care to accommodate the possible scenarios of COVID-19-positive patients who may present to NHH
- A shift to essential only services in Diagnostic Imaging, Ambulatory Care and Surgical Services – all non-essential tests or procedure booked at NHH have or are in the process of being postponed and special arrangements have been put in place to safely accommodate those who require urgent Diagnostic, Ambulatory or Surgical care
- Ongoing collaboration with regional partners at a new COVID-19 table to help work together as a team across all five hospitals in our region (Haliburton Highlands, Ross Memorial, Campbellford Memorial, NHH and Peterborough Regional) to ensure care for the most critically ill

Community donations

With help from our friends in the NHH Foundation, NHH is also responding to the many generous offers of support from the community. We thank everyone for the many calls and emails. At present we are recommending the following tips to those who wish to help so that we may route this exceptional generosity into the hospital appropriately.

- **Offers of equipment/supplies** – NHH is actively inviting and accepting unopened, CSA-approved personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, N95 respirators and procedure (surgical) masks from area businesses and individuals. Please note: Home-made surgical masks are NOT accepted at this time, but a team has been formed to work with area partners to explore local production of essential items like 3-D printed

face shields, locally sewn items such as 'scrubie bags' and scrubs, as well as opportunities to reuse and even recycle existing supplies. All equipment and supply donations must first be vetted through our Materials Management department. They cannot be dropped off without first confirming that they can be accepted. Contact Charity Meiklejohn at cmeiklejohn@nhh.ca

- **Offers of food** – We must decline, for infection control purposes. NHH recommends that those who wish to donate food consider donating to local foodbanks OR reach out via the local (Facebook) Northumberland CAREMONGERING GROUP www.fornorthumberland.com
- **Offers of funds** – Please contact our NHH Foundation care of Rhonda Cunningham rcunningham@nhh.ca. Watch for further details in the NHH Foundation's own community updates on their social feeds and website, www.nhhfoundation.ca
- **Offers of health human resources** – Please contact our Human Resources department care of careers@nhh.ca and note "COVID-19" and their credentials (eg. NP, RN) in the subject line
- **Other offers** – Please contact NHH Public Affairs care of jgillard@nhh.ca

In this together

We are watching our colleagues in other countries, to our south, and bracing. None of us knows what it will be like for Ontario or Northumberland, but we are all committed to doing our very best to prepare. Without a doubt, we are all in this together. We must meet the challenge of COVID-19 as a community. If any one of us fails to recognize COVID's significance, and not act, the rest of our efforts will be weakened.

As highlighted above, your NHH team has been working as hard as it possibly can to prepare. We are certainly not alone. We thank all of our community partners for their efforts, including: long-term care homes, seniors' residents for restricting visitors and stopping communal dining; home and community care providers for honouring the strictest of hand hygiene and infection control protocols as they enter the homes of vulnerable individuals to deliver much needed home care; primary care providers who have stepped up to offer virtual care to meet other medical needs and keep people out of the Emergency Department and hospital; Community Care Northumberland for safely transporting dialysis and cancer patients to and from their life-sustaining appointments and delivering frozen meals to those who cannot get out and have no one close by to support them; Northumberland Paramedic Managers for supporting screening and testing in our community; local 'caremongering' groups who have stepped up to fill any gap; and so many more.

Everyone in this community is doing their part and it is truly inspiring to see.

By following the directions of our public health experts and taking all of these steps together to slow the spread of this virus and 'flatten the COVID-19' curve, your hospital team, together with all of our partners, is working to ensure that we will continue to be here for you and your family if and when you should need us.

Social Distancing

The single most important thing we would like our community to do for us is to help us by helping Canada flatten the curve. Simply put, we need to stop the spread of this infection. If you are not deemed essential, stay home. It is everyone's duty in this province to practice social distancing as strictly as possible, not just for a day or two... but for as long as it is required.

COVID-19 and NHH A message to our community, continued

NHH COVID-19 Assessment Centre and online self-assessment tool

NHH's COVID-19 Assessment Centre opened in the hospital's Ambulatory Care Clinic space on Saturday, March 14. Staffed by area physicians and hospital staff, the Assessment Centre team has assessed more than 462 individuals to date, including 206 virtual/phone assessments. Of those assessed, 66% have been swabbed. The Centre remains open daily from 8AM to 8PM. A new community assessment and testing service is also coming soon through Northumberland Paramedics' management team. Please help our Assessment teams help those who need us most. Not everyone needs to go to an assessment centre for testing. Help us conserve our laboratory and swabbing capacity. Self-assess before coming in with the online tool on Ontario's COVID-19 website www.covid-19.ontario.ca/. Positive cases in our region are reported through the Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit.

Northumberland Care – Virtual care option to access primary care

A new website has launched in Northumberland County to ensure the community knows the best way to get in touch with their family doctor, and for those without a family doctor to get the care they need. For those with a family doctor, individuals in Northumberland can use Northumberland Care to find the best way to reach their family doctor during this time.

Northumberland Care is a collaboration between the family doctors of Brighton, Campbellford, Cobourg, Colborne, Hastings, Port Hope, and Warkworth, Ontario Health Team - Northumberland, Northumberland Hills Hospital, and the Port Hope Walk In Clinic. See details at www.northumberlandcare.com, call 211 or email Dr. Kate Everdell, Family Physician, kate.everdell@dreverdell.ca.

Walk-in Community Mental Health Counselling phone support

We know that many are feeling the mental strain of these most challenging times. Though temporarily unable to see walk-in clients, the Walk-In Community Mental Health Counselling clinic is offering phone support for clients on regular walk-in days (Tuesdays from 8 am – 4pm and Thursdays from 10 am – 6pm). Call 1-905-377-7784 for telephone support. Your call will be returned by walk-in staff by the end of the business day. As always, for individuals in mental health crisis:

- call Four County Crisis at **1-705-745-6484** or **1-866-995-9933**,
- reach out to the Community and Social Services Help Line by dialing **211**,
- or, go to the closest Emergency Department

COVID-19 information sources

- For the most recent provincial information on COVID-19, see Ontario's dedicated COVID website: www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus
- For the most recent information on confirmed cases in our region, see the HKPR District Health Unit website at www.hkpr.on.ca
- For the latest NHH information, see NHH's website www.nhh.ca, which also has links to these resources and more, and carries regularly updated answers to the most frequently asked questions on our dedicated COVID-19 webpage: www.nhh.ca/covid-19.

Please keep following NHH and the NHH Foundation on our social media feeds and share. Those without internet access or literacy, or with special needs, will need help to get information. Please support them as you are able by sharing essential information through word-of-mouth.

