

NHH team offering life support training to staff and community

Do you know what to do if someone goes into cardiac arrest (i.e., is found without a pulse)? A team of experienced physicians and health-care providers at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) would welcome the chance to teach you and your loved ones.

Dr. Michael Bayer, local family physician and Advanced Cardiac Life Support medical director, has been among a small group of area doctors and nurses offering Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) training to local health-care providers for close to two decades. Under Dr. Bayer's leadership, the teaching team at NHH is growing and, as a result, new course options, such as Basic Life Support (BLS) courses, will be made available for health-care providers and lay audiences in the hospital's second-floor Education Centre. The aim of the enhanced offering is simple: spread as much knowledge as possible about current resuscitation guidelines so that, when a crisis occurs, the necessary steps may be taken to save a life.

"The first few minutes of a cardiac arrest (an abnormal rhythm of the heart such that blood does not flow to vital organs) are critical," says Dr. Bayer. "Restoring blood flow to the heart and other organs is key to minimizing damage. It's very important for us to keep up to date on the present standard of care for treating acute cardiac emergencies and to apply it consistently within smaller communities such as ours. National and international standards—for basic and advanced life support—are constantly being updated as new research is conducted on the best techniques for chest compressions and the use of automated external defibrillators (devices that can shock the heart back into its normal rhythm)."



Dr. Roger Woodward and Respiratory Therapist Angie Gammage are part of the team providing life support training at NHH this fall.



Dr. Michael Bayer demonstrates the ideal depth for chest compressions on one of the hospital's new mannequins.

Much more is known today about life support and defibrillation than we knew decades ago. As more and more public spaces such as malls, libraries and arenas invest in defibrillators, knowledge about how to use them must also grow. The appropriate rate and depth of chest compressions, assuring good ventilation of the lungs, and minimizing interruption of chest compressions are all important elements with very specific steps to be followed. Specialized mannequins have also been designed to support the necessary training.

"For those who have had training in Basic and Advanced Life Support," says Dr. Bayer, "regular recertification is required."

While life support training is offered from a range of agencies in Ontario, the unique benefits of the NHH-based offering, Bayer feels, include the interdisciplinary team dynamic, the location and the availability of a new 'family' of state-of-the-art training mannequins.

"NHH's support in hosting these sessions at the hospital, and expanding our mannequins to allow more students to be registered, is very much appreciated. For hospital staff, this means that they do not have to travel far to keep on top of the latest guidelines, so the necessary updates are easier to complete. Beyond health-care providers, as interest is expressed, we hope to begin making BLS available for lay rescuers. We also hope to be able to combine both Basic and Advanced Life Support in a single course in the coming months, as we believe this is appealing to many as well."

Supporting the expanded NHH offering is a growing team of instructors, including: a respiratory therapist, an emergency department nurse, and two anesthetists. An emergency physician is also planning to join the team in 2017.

Typically offered in the spring and fall, additional training sessions will be added as demand requires. Dates for the next two NHH education sessions are:

- **Friday and Saturday, September 16-17 – ACLS Full Course (16 hours)**
- **Friday, October 21 – ACLS Recertification (6 hours)**

Space is limited and registration is required in advance. For general information on life support practices and the current standards for basic and advanced care, please see the Heart & Stroke Foundation's website at www.heartandstroke.on.ca.

To register for an NHH ACLS course, or express interest in the planned BLS and/or combined BLS/ALCS offering, please contact Angie Gammage, Respiratory Therapist, at agammage@nhh.ca or by phone via Maureen Canfield at 905-372-6811, ext. 4002.