

Mock hospital / Cobourg Police Service emergency training exercise completed with positive results

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) and Cobourg Police Services (CPS) successfully completed a mock emergency training exercise and response at 1000 DePalma Drive on Thursday, August 16th with positive results.

Preparations have been under way for months, but the exercise itself lasted, as planned, just under 30 minutes (from 1:00 PM to approximately 1:25 PM) with minimal disruption to hospital patients, visitors and staff, and multiple benefits gained.

Building on joint police/hospital training exercises held at NHH in April of this year, the purpose of the latest drill was to provide another opportunity to test NHH's Code Silver (Active Attacker) response as well as the Cobourg Police Service response, in collaboration with external partners, specifically Northumberland OPP, Port Hope Police Services and Northumberland Paramedics.

The exercise was also an opportunity for NHH and CPS to collaboratively test what has emerged as a new hospital/police training model that could be of benefit to other hospitals beyond Northumberland.

"We want to ensure we are doing anything and everything we can to ensure everyone feels safe and secure at NHH," said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO, in her pre-event briefing with observers, participants and managers.

The mock exercise took place in multiple locations throughout the hospital, beginning with the first event at the main front entrance and extending into the Main Street Bistro on the first floor, before spreading up onto the second floor 'bridge' overlooking the cafeteria. The third and concluding event occurred in the Emergency Department waiting area, extending briefly out into the parking lot on the south side of the building. Actors simulated roles of active attackers and casualties and the sound of gunfire (blanks) was used.

Hospital functions continued through the exercise, business as usual. The exercise was limited to public spaces, corridors and waiting areas. Patient care areas were not part of the mock exercise.

Multiple tactics were used to communicate advance awareness of the exercise to patients, visitors and families present in the hospital, and many expressed thanks to hospital staff for the transparency, and the ongoing commitment to safety training.

Staff, physicians and volunteers used the opportunity to apply the "run OR hide OR fight" response set out in hospital policies and procedures, as appropriate, and to guide visitors, patients and caregivers.

Observers, identified with orange vests, also participated, with representation from area police forces, hospital staff and management, as well as three members of NHH's Patient and Family Advisory Committee.



From left to right: A/Staff Sergeant Brent Allison, Cobourg Police Service; Rohan Gonsalves, NHH Director, Quality, Safety and Decision Support; Constable Shawn LaBelle, Cobourg Police Service; Paul VandeGraaf, Deputy Police Chief, Cobourg Police Service; and Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO.

Lessons learned from preliminary debriefings with observers and staff

Coordinators of the exercise sat down with police, observers and actors immediately following the event. While further analysis will occur, including a review of police video captured during the exercise, some key themes quickly emerged:

- **Swift internal response** - staff members (multiple) reported the emergency as soon as they observed it, and the appropriate emergency code was called, to spread word through the hospital and alert first responders;
- **Appropriate reactions** - staff members and volunteers responded as they should have, when they heard the emergency code announced, by running, hiding or locking down their area;
- **Swift police response** - police responded swiftly and appropriately, arriving on scene within minutes of the reports of shots being fired;
- **Public awareness of response in event of active attacker** - there are opportunities for further public awareness on the best practices in the event of an active attacker, not just in a hospital setting but anywhere;
- **Sounding the alarm in a busy space – other options?** - there are opportunities to review the way in which the active attacker alarm is sounded within a loud hospital environment - NHH's overhead paging system, particularly with the competing noise in certain areas, and sounds of equipment, made it difficult for some to hear the overhead page

"This has been a very useful experience for us, to develop and implement this exercise in the middle of a working hospital, in collaboration with other area first responders," said Cobourg Deputy Police Chief Paul VandeGraaf. "As police, we have had experience drilling active attacker scenarios in other public spaces and institutions, such as schools, but hospitals are unique, and the opportunity to test and train our procedures cannot be understated. We hope our learnings will benefit not just Northumberland, but also hospitals well beyond."

"We want to thank the Cobourg Police Service for all the work they put into our latest training exercise," said Davis. "I also want to thank our NHH team, for continuing to provide the necessary patient care, while also participating, and of course the patients and visitors who were involved, for their understanding and support. We hope that we will never have to use the skills we have, but the exercise has proven that we feel better being as prepared as we possibly can to ensure the safety and security of everyone at NHH."

NHH's Steve Akil organizing "WALK MY COMMUTE" fundraiser

NHH's information technology help desk coordinator **Steve Akil** is making some amazing lifestyle changes. He wants to demonstrate that anything is possible and, while at it, raise funds for priority equipment for Northumberland Hills Hospital!

On **Saturday, September 8th** 2018 Akil, shown above, will walk from his home in Newcastle all the way to NHH – a distance of 35KM. Staff, family and area residents are encouraged to join him at the finish line (in front of NHH) as he completes his goal on September 8th at approximately 3:30 PM.

Northumberland News reporter Dominik Wisniewski stopped by the hospital last week to learn more about Steve's plans. Click the link below to read Dominik's great story. Interested in helping Steve reach his \$5,000 goal? Visit his personal fundraising page on the NHH Foundation website: www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/northumberland-hills-hospital-foundation/third-party/walkingmycommute/ Go Steve!



Photo credit: Dominik Wisniewski, Northumberland News