

NHH obstetrical/gynecological services growing to meet local need
Minimally invasive laparoscopic surgeries now being performed with arrival of new expertise, equipment - births also on the rise

Almost a year and a half after welcoming a third obstetrician/gynecologist to the team, Northumberland Hills Hospital is already seeing evidence of the positive impact.

Dr. Nasser Abu Awad arrived in the fall of 2016, bringing additional local capacity for pregnancy care, delivery and infertility expertise as well as new expertise in minimally invasive laparoscopic gynecological surgery, a service not previously offered at NHH.

Dr. Abu Awad joined Dr. Michael Green and Dr. Asiya Hameed, bringing to three the number of obstetrician/gynecologists active at NHH.

Supported by the obstetrician/gynecologists as well as family physicians and a growing network of local midwives, more women are seeking to deliver in NHH's comfortable, family-friendly birthing suite. Births are on track to increase again this fiscal year, building further on the increase recorded last year at March 31st, 2017. Births have increased steadily at NHH from 495 in 2015/16, to 540 in 2016/17 with 552 anticipated by the end of the current fiscal year on March 31, 2018.

Both **Dr. Abu Awad** and **Dr. Asiya Hameed** accept new obstetrical patients on a self-referral basis. Both now operate offices on site at NHH, conveniently located adjacent to the NHH Birthing Suite and other hospital-based supports. "We recommend patients reach out to us at any time in their pregnancy or before for an initial consultation, and no later than 20 weeks; the sooner the better," said Dr. Abu Awad. Obstetrical patients may self-refer to Dr. Abu Awad directly by calling his office at 905-377-7764; self-referrals to Dr. Asiya Hameed are asked to call 905-377-7796.

Minimally invasive gynecological surgeries have also advanced at NHH, with multiple benefits.

Hysterectomies involve surgery to the uterus due to complications in a woman's reproductive system. While traditionally performed at NHH through either open (abdominal) or vaginal procedures, the preferred method, when medically permitted, is through a laparoscopic technique or, essentially, through a scope.

Where no laparoscopic hysterectomies were performed locally in 2016/17, the current 2017/18 fiscal year has seen 17 hysterectomies (or 28 percent) performed laparoscopically by Dr. Abu Awad, with February and March data still to report.

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Minimally invasive surgery offers benefits to both the patient and the system. Patient benefits include less pain, reduced risk of complications, such as infection or blood clots, faster recovery and minimal cosmetic impact (smaller incisions). From a hospital and health-system perspective, minimally invasive surgeries require shorter lengths of stay which, in turn, free up much needed acute care bed capacity for other patients' needs.

Donations from local residents, collected through the efforts of the NHH Foundation, supported the hospital's purchase of the necessary equipment to introduce the laparoscopic service. The data emerging in the past year provide strong evidence of the positive system impact. The actual length of stay for laparoscopic hysterectomies is one day—almost one-third the length of stay for those who received open or vaginal hysterectomies in the same period.

Gynecological consultations with an NHH obstetrician/gynecologist are coordinated through one's primary care provider (usually a family doctor or nurse practitioner but also, in the case of prenatal care, through a midwife).

"If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to talk with your primary care provider and, if appropriate, request a referral. Again, as in the case of pregnancy care, the earlier a conversation is started, the better," said Dr. Hameed.

"Patients in our community have the benefit of local access to specialized obstetrical and gynecological care, and they are taking advantage of it," said NHH Chief of Staff Dr. Mukesh Bhargava. "This is a key component of NHH's strategic commitment to high quality care close to home, and we are very pleased to see the impact of this focus in this past year and a half."



NHH's newest Obstetrician-Gynecologist Dr. Nasser Abu Awad (right) with his colleague, Dr. Asiya Hameed, both accept direct referrals from obstetrical patients

New phone system coming to NHH Wednesday, April 4th

NHH will migrate to a new state-of-the-art telephone system on Wednesday, April 4th.

All telephone numbers and extensions will remain the same and supports are in place to minimize phone/fax service disruption during switchover.

The benefits of the upgrade include the following:

- A fully digital telephone system
- Increased capacity for handling calls and tracking call volumes
- New voice recognition capacity on the main telephone number
- An upgraded voice mail system

The switchover will be made in the early hours of Wednesday, April 4th (4:00 AM to approximately 5:00 AM), when call volumes are typically low.

All internal telephones will function while the switchover occurs. Outside calling will be managed through analog "power fail" telephones located at the main Switchboard and select nursing stations throughout the building.

During the switchover period all incoming calls will be managed through these "power fail" telephones. Calls will be received but direct call transfers will not be possible during the switchover. Urgent calls will be prioritized and information passed along on behalf of the caller.

Key community partners, including local police and ambulance services, are being notified in advance of the switchover date and provided with alternate cell phone contact numbers as additional back-up. Extra staff will be on-hand through the switchover process to ensure a smooth transition.

It is expected that the switchover process will take approximately one hour at which point telephone and fax access will return to normal. NHH thanks everyone for their patience and support during the switchover process.

See the related news release on nhh.ca for further details.