

Update on COVID-19 Visiting Guidelines - Restrictions eased for inpatients outside of outbreak areas

With key public health and health system indicators continuing to improve, an update to Northumberland Hills Hospital's COVID-19 Visitor Policy has been implemented in consultation with staff, physicians, infection prevention specialists and members of the hospital's Patient and Family Advisory Council.

Effective Tuesday, February 22, in-person visiting hours at NHH returned to 12 hours/day (8AM to 8PM) on all eligible inpatient units, similar to the practice introduced in the fall of 2020 and again in the summer of 2021.

The maximum daily number of visitors/essential caregivers is limited to one person per patient per day. Exceptions to the one-person and 8AM to 8PM rule will continue as follows:

- For inpatients at imminent end of life additional visitors will be considered at the discretion of the care team
- For obstetrical patients, birth partner AND labour coach will be permitted
- For outpatients, the following exceptions are permitted:
 - ◆ essential caregivers for children coming to the hospital for care (children = 18 and under)
 - ◆ essential caregivers for those with communication challenges and/or cognitive impairments - outpatient settings only (Emergency Department visits, Diagnostic Imaging, etc.)

All visitors/essential caregivers continue to be required to sign in and document their contact information for purposes of contact tracing.

Rapid Antigen Tests being piloted at NHH as an added precaution

As an additional protection for vulnerable inpatients, NHH is also piloting the use of Rapid Antigen Tests for those visiting admitted inpatients as part of its screening process. The Rapid Antigen Tests are being supplied to applicable visitors and administered on site prior to entry.

No in-person visiting on inpatient units on outbreak

Visiting continues to be on hold for inpatients whose room is located in a COVID-19 hot zone (i.e. a unit designated in a COVID-19 'outbreak' status by Public Health) OR confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19. As of Tuesday, March 1, there was one unit in a designated COVID-19 outbreak at NHH: the Inpatient Rehabilitation unit in the Post-Acute Specialty Services area on the first floor. It is expected that this outbreak will be lifted by Public Health in the coming days.

For further details, including information on virtual visiting, please see the related media release and supporting FAQ documents, at nhh.ca

Rheumatologist welcomed to NHH medical team - Referrals for Dr. Jason An now being accepted



NHH is pleased to announce the recruitment of Dr. Jason An, Rheumatologist, to its growing team of local specialists.

"It is my great pleasure to formally welcome Dr. An, MD, MSc, FRCPC, to NHH and Northumberland," said Dr. Mukesh Bhargava, Chief of Staff. "Our recruitment focus in recent years has been strategically aimed at ensuring local patients have access to more of the specialty clinical services they need, closer to home. A key

enabler of this is Ontario's excellent [Telemedicine Network, OTN](#), one of the largest telemedicine networks in the world, which uses two-way videoconferencing to provide access to care for patients in hospitals and other health care locations in a manner that is efficient and accessible for both the patient and the provider."

"NHH has previously welcomed two Neurologists to Northumberland, Dr. Philippe Rizek (2020) and Dr. Emily Crookshank (2021), through the creation of a unique 'hosted' OTN model," said Dr. Bhargava. "Building on that successful model, which has significantly reduced local wait times for Neurology consultations from 6 to 24 months to 4 to 6 weeks, we are now welcoming Dr. Jason An. Concurrent with this has been the introduction of new virtual elements to the delivery of neonatal and pediatric critical care support, through a partnership with The Hospital for Sick Children, and community mental health and addiction supports, through our Rapid Access Addiction Medicine clinic. There are many opportunities to explore with the support of OTN and we aim to continue to explore them for the benefit of local residents in the months and years to come."

Dr. An attended medical school at the University of Calgary, followed by an Internal Medicine Residency at the University of Alberta. He completed his Rheumatology Fellowship training at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, followed by a Fellowship in Rare Diseases at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto where he focused on the genetic analysis of rare autoinflammatory and immune dysregulation disorders. Dr. An is currently also a Clinical Associate in the Division of Rheumatology at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, and holds Courtesy Clinical Staff privileges at the Hospital for Sick Children, Division of Rheumatology, Department of Medicine.

"It is my great pleasure and privilege to join the Northumberland Hills Hospital network as a new Rheumatologist," said Dr. An. "I very much look forward to working with the Northumberland Hills Hospital community."

Beginning this month (March, 2022), Dr. An, with the support of NHH's Telemedicine Coordinator, Registered Nurse Rebecca Rutherford, will support local primary care providers and specialists by providing virtual rheumatology consultations for a range of inflammatory disorders such as arthritis, connective tissue diseases, and autoinflammatory conditions.

Referring providers are invited to fax OTN referrals directly to NHH, care of the OTN Coordinator, at 905-373-6972, with attention to the specialty required, e.g. Neurology, Rheumatology.

Health Professions Scholarship deadline extended to March 15! Two awards of \$1500/each available

Applicants must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a full-time study program. See nhh.ca for details!

Virtual PACE speakers' series continues March 16: "How to Shift Our Focus Back to Prevention and Wellness"

The event is free but pre-registration is required. Find the registration link and details, including recordings of previous PACE conversations, at pacetalks.com