

COVID-19 and NHH - An update from President and CEO Linda Davis

Pandemic measures remain in place at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) as staff and physicians continue to work very hard to keep ahead of the continuously evolving situation regarding COVID-19.

Ontario's state of emergency continues and with that, so too do the steps NHH has put in place to minimize risk from COVID-19 and maximize our team's ability to respond to priority hospital and community needs. Specifically, the following pandemic measures remain:

- Access to the hospital remains restricted, with screening at public and staff entrances, and visitor restrictions in place with minimal exceptions – patients who come to NHH on an outpatient basis NHH for cancer and supportive care treatments, and dialysis, continue to access through a dedicated doorway adjacent to those clinics to minimize the amount of interaction required with others
- Appointments and procedures deemed non-urgent remain on hold in our Diagnostic Imaging, Surgical Services and Ambulatory Care; urgent procedures in all of these areas continue
- Volunteer activities continue to be suspended, to minimize the number of individuals in the hospital at any one time

As I've said prior, while the global pandemic is changing how we operate, NHH continues to provide essential services. Although we may look a little different in our masks and personal protective equipment, NHH's Emergency Department team is here to care for you and your loved ones. If you or someone you care for needs emergency care, please do not postpone your visit. Your NHH team stands ready to get you the care you need with all the necessary precautions in place to keep you and yours safe. Our ED team's gratitude to Northumberland's family physicians for stepping up to continue to provide care to local patients virtually, by phone or video consults, through the www.NorthumberlandCare.com service cannot be overstated. Thank you to all of Northumberland's primary care providers for your continued support. See details at www.northumberlandcare.com, call 211 or email Dr. Kate Everdell, Family Physician, kate.everdell@dreverdell.ca.

NHH's Incident Command Table, now in place for over 6 weeks, continues to respond daily to the directives from Ontario Health and the Ministries of Health and, most recently, Long-Term Care. Fortunately, the number of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases remains low in Northumberland. Your NHH team has continued to plan for the worst and hope for the best. We have increased capacity throughout the hospital, rolled out enhanced training for staff to support safest possible personal protective equipment (PPE) donning and doffing procedures, and completed pre-arranged pandemic pathway planning for all possible scenarios of COVID-19 positive or presumed positive patients. We are ready!

While NHH has not yet seen high COVID-19 critical care patient volumes as some other hospitals have, we continue to preserve our increased inpatient bed capacity so we can step into action should the need arise. At the same time, per our government's directive, we are turning our collective attention outward to offer support and assistance in the community, where it is most required.

Last week, NHH announced the expansion of an existing partnership with Northumberland Paramedics to proactively reach out to organizations and groups in west Northumberland to offer on-site COVID-19 testing and support in the community. A team of NHH staff have been onsite at Alderville First Nation's Health and Social Services building this week, supporting Chief Mowat and Council to enhance assessment and testing of individuals in that community.

Meetings continue with local long-term care, retirement home and congregate living agency partners to identify and implement immediate opportunities for NHH staff and physicians to help. Priorities established include COVID-19 assessment and testing of both staff and residents, education and training on infection prevention and the use and conservation of personal protective equipment (PPE), and additional staffing supports in the event of a facility outbreak. NHH is working now to provide these and any other opportunities for assistance as required.

With help from our partners in the NHH Foundation, NHH continues to receive hundreds of generous offers of support from the community. From local sewers and crafters who answered our call for support, strength stones placed quietly at the staff entrance, banners on the fence overlooking the staff parking lot to full-scale tractor parades and displays from area police and first responders, we are humbled by this community's kindness and support for our team during this very challenging time. Those who wish to help are encouraged to visit the Q&A section of the COVID-19 pages of our website www.nhh.ca/covid-19 for the latest information on how to donate funds, supplies, and human resources. And we thank everyone for their patience as we try our best to respond directly to each and every call or email.

Physical Distancing is Working

While the temptation is to relax our efforts against this virus, the experts tell us that would be premature. I am so proud of all that this community has accomplished in the face of this unprecedented crisis. Please continue to do what you're doing. It is working! Wash your hands frequently, limit your physical interaction with others, and maintain the 2-metre distance that is required to stop the spread of this virus and we will beat this, together.



Think you may have symptoms associated with COVID-19? NHH's COVID-19 Assessment Centre team is here to help. The Centre offers virtual screening (by telephone) between 8AM and 4PM, Monday to Friday, and from 10AM to 2PM Saturdays and Sundays. Appointments are scheduled following the virtual screening for those who require physical assessment and testing at the Centre. Call the Centre directly at 905-377-7783. In the event that symptoms are severe, call 911 and alert the dispatcher to the potential concern regarding COVID-19 so they can be appropriately prepared.



Recognizing the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the battle against COVID-19, one Port Hope business realized they were in a unique position to help protect staff at NHH. Weir ESCO has temporarily loaned the hospital 20 Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs), which will be primarily used in areas of the hospital where aerosolized procedures, such as intubations, are most common. Pictured above are representatives from Weir ESCO (on step) Brad Wannamaker and Damien Demmings, with representatives from NHH (left to right) Ellen Douglas, Charity Meiklejohn, Dr. Michael Barrie, Dr. Roger Woodward, and Dr. Mukesh Bhargava.



On April 15th NHH issued an open call to local residents who like to sew or crochet to consider making and donating any (or all) of four items: surgical hats (cotton head covers to be worn by front-line healthcare workers beneath their hospital-issued Personal Protective Equipment to cover their hair/head); scrub bags (to be used by healthcare workers to transport their soiled scrubs home and safely into their washing machine—bag and all—without contact); mask buddies (small crocheted bands with buttons to hold surgical masks from rubbing against the ears) and; blue face masks (reusable face masks made with the help of a community partner for local patients using special hospital-issued material). The response has been OVERWHELMING! Shown at left are Tim Badgely, Jocelyn Jones, Linda Cable, Yvonne Shannon, Pam Russell and Jessica Sears, six of the talented souls involved to date and, above, two of NHH's grateful staff. Thank you, Northumberland, for your creativity and your generosity!