



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

inspiring strength, dignity and compassion

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Official opening – Ontario Breast Screening Program, Northumberland Hills Hospital

*New local service introduces self-referral option for routine mammography examinations
for local women aged 50-74*

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2009 – The Clay and Elaine Elliott Women's Health Centre at Northumberland Hills Hospital is now home to a welcome new addition: an affiliate centre of the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP). An expansion of the Hospital's existing mammography service, the new program was officially opened on Wednesday, November 18.

For many eligible women in the area, the addition of the new OBSP may translate into easier access to routine breast screening. A key component of the new service is the ability for patients to self-refer. This feature will be of particular benefit for those without a family physician. As with the previous process for mammography at NHH, NHH mammography staff will perform the OBSP mammograms. The results will be read by NHH radiologists.

All Ontario women between the ages of 50 and 74 are eligible for the OBSP, providing they have had no acute breast symptoms, no personal history of breast cancer or breast implants. Women with these factors, as well as those over the age of 74, are encouraged to consult with their family physician about continued screening.

All eligible women, including those who are currently attending an OBSP affiliate outside of the west Northumberland area, can come to NHH for their next and future biennial routine OBSP mammography examinations. NHH will make the necessary arrangements to have any previous mammography studies, including those completed at another OBSP centre, transferred to NHH.

The OBSP is a province-wide organized breast screening program designed to ensure Ontario women receive the benefits of regular screening. The program is operated by Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Its aim is to increase the number of women who have regular screening to allow cancers to be diagnosed at as early a stage as is possible to make treatment easier and more successful.

The death rate from breast cancer in Ontario is decreasing. Between 1989 and 2002 the mortality rate decreased 29 per cent in women age 50-69. The decline is due to both screening and improved treatments. Almost 80 per cent of the women found to have breast cancer through the OBSP since its launch in 1990 have been lymph node negative, leading to an excellent prognosis in most women.

NHH's existing mammography service completed 4,958 exams in fiscal year 2008/2009. It is expected that 1,020 screens will be delivered through the OBSP, Northumberland Hills Hospital in its first year of operation.

For family physicians in the community, the arrival of OBSP may assist in promoting breast screening to eligible patients, booking mammography and arranging follow-up. All OBSP patients will be informed directly of their screening results, within two weeks of their mammogram, with a copy of the report going to their physician. Women will also receive recalls/reminder letters when it is time to return to the OBSP, ensuring follow-up and continuous surveillance. For women who do not have a family doctor, clinical follow-up of suspected abnormalities will be provided by two local surgeons, Dr. R. Dale Taylor and Dr. Andrew Stratford, if these women so desire.

The OBSP does not replace the services of the family physician or the benefit of a periodic health examination. In cases where patients are under the care of a physician, the family physician retains the primary care responsibility for management of services through the assessment process.

It is imperative that women continue to receive annual physical examination. Such examination is not provided through OBSP at Northumberland Hills Hospital.

In attendance at the opening of OBSP, Northumberland Hills Hospital were representatives from NHH as well as three representatives from the OBSP Regional Hub in Kingston, Dr. Hugh Langley, OBSP Regional Medical Co-ordinator, Julia Niblett, Director, Cancer Prevention and Screening and OBSP Regional Administrator and Pam Jessop, Regional Hub Manager. Also present to applaud the opening were representatives of the NHH Foundation and the NHH Auxiliary, who have championed the community fund-raising necessary to purchase the two digital mammography units in operation at NHH.

Helen Brenner, Vice President, Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive for NHH, stated: "Accreditation through the Canadian Association of Radiologists – Mammography Accreditation Program is a prerequisite for affiliation with the OBSP. We see our new affiliation with OBSP as a further endorsement of the quality care we are proud to deliver at NHH every day. I'm particularly pleased that local women are now able to self-refer to this important service. This is directly aligned with our Hospital's mission to provide excellent health care in an environment that promotes the dignity and well-being of everyone."

The new service began booking its first clients this month. To book an appointment, or obtain more information, please contact the OBSP, Northumberland Hills Hospital line directly at: 905-377-7795. To arrange an interview, or obtain further information, please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital - The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The 137-bed acute care hospital delivers a broad range of services, including emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, complex/long-term care, rehabilitation, palliative care and obstetrical care. A variety of ambulatory care clinics are also offered at NHH. In addition to these, NHH also sponsors a Community Mental Health Centre and an Assertive Community Treatment Team. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs close to 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East LHIN. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.

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