



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local mental health services enhanced through integration with Ontario Shores

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, December 8, 2011 – Benefits directly related to the April 2010 integration with Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences were the focus of a presentation delivered to the December meeting of the Northumberland Hills Hospital Board of Directors by Scott Pepin, Director of NHH's Community Mental Health Services.

NHH engaged Ontario Shores in June 2008 to conduct an operational review of the mental health programs at NHH, explained Mr. Pepin. What resulted was a comprehensive three-month review including a local service analysis and operational recommendations to enhance the program by increasing linkages with Ontario Shores, the regional mental health centre in Whitby.

In December 2008 a director was recruited from Ontario Shores to take on management responsibility of NHH's Community Mental Health Services and to implement the recommendations identified in the service analysis.

After 12 months of very positive results, NHH and Ontario Shores agreed to formalize the relationship in the form of a *voluntary integration*. In April 2010 the Central East Local Health Integration Network (Central East LHIN) approved the integration between NHH and Ontario Shores.

Mr. Pepin summarized the enhancements gained through the integration in five areas:

- crisis intervention services;
- centralized patient intake;
- staff development and access to specialized resources;
- health record management; and,
- space improvements.

Crisis intervention service improvements

Clients experiencing a mental health crisis often look to the NHH Emergency Department (ED) for support. Improvements to the crisis room in the ED were one of the opportunities identified in the Ontario Shores review, as was increased crisis support in the NHH ED. Today, NHH employs a state-of-the-art crisis intervention model focused on risk management and direct linkages with local police departments. The ED crisis room has been redesigned to better suit patient and staff needs and a crisis policy has been developed and implemented for reference by all ED staff. Many patients are now

being able to avoid the ED entirely. In 2011 alone, 190 crisis assessments were completed in the ED -- a service not previously available at NHH. A further 97 patients were successfully diverted from the NHH Emergency Department entirely as a result of a community visit from NHH's mental health crisis clinician, summoned for assistance by police, family physician or other community resources.

Patient intake

Another recommendation to come out of the 2008 review was the need for a centralized intake process for local clients. The position of Intake/Crisis Coordinator has since been created at NHH, together with a centralized external referral form. An open registration process is also now in place, allowing clients to meet one-on-one with a clinician or complete the required documentation over the telephone and contacts across the various mental health programs offered at NHH have increased by 74%.

Staff development and resources

NHH staff members are now able to participate in a range of professional development opportunities at Ontario Shores, including training in best practice therapies. As well, staff and psychiatrists have access to experts in specialty areas of mental health, increasing the level of service available close to home, and greatly improving convenience to local patients.

Health records

Improved consistency of documentation practices has been introduced as a result of the successful integration of a new documentation template brought to the NHH program from Ontario Shores. Training has also been rolled out to all NHH mental health staff, emphasizing the importance of succinct and accurate reporting using common, pre-approved terminology.

Space

The final mental health service enhancement highlighted by Mr. Pepin related to recent investments made to the physical space housing NHH's program. Previously located in two separate offices off the main hospital site, NHH's mental health team was co-located last month to a newly renovated space at 1011 Elgin Street West in Cobourg. The new location is accessible, brighter and much more conducive to the specialized programming required.

"This investment signals--for staff and clients alike--the importance of the mental health program to NHH and the community," said Helen Brenner, Vice President, Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive at NHH.

For more 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 acute care hospital delivers a broad range of services, including emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, restorative/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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