



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ontario Breast Screening Program celebrates 1st anniversary at NHH with more than double the patient volumes expected

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, November 25, 2010 – One year ago last week NHH announced the expansion of its mammography service with the introduction of an important new addition: the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP).

Since that time, 2,230 screening mammograms have been performed at NHH through OBSP—more than double the figure expected in the Program's first year of local operation and confirmation that the service is doing exactly what it was intended to do: improve access to routine breast screening.

A province-wide screening program, OBSP 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.

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. Women who are eligible for OBSP are referred from their physician or—a key component of the new service when it opened a year ago—self-refer.

Ian Moffat, Director of the Diagnostic Imaging program at NHH, notes: “All eligible women, including those who previously attended an OBSP affiliate outside the west Northumberland area, can come to NHH for their next and future biennial routine OBSP mammography examinations. We'll make the necessary arrangements to have any previous mammography studies, including those completed at another OBSP centre, transferred to NHH. All OBSP patients are informed directly of their screening results within two weeks of their mammogram, with a copy of the report going to their physician. Women also receive recalls/reminder letters when it is time to return to the OBSP, ensuring follow-up and continuous surveillance. For those who do not have a family doctor, clinical follow-up of suspected abnormalities is provided by two local surgeons, Dr. R. Dale Taylor and Dr. Andrew Stratford, if these women so desire.”

Another important enhancement to NHH's breast screening program is the availability of stereotactic core biopsies of the breast. Available thanks to the donation of funds from the NHH Auxiliary to purchase the necessary medical equipment, the biopsies are

performed when a suspicious looking micro-calcification is detected within the breast by a radiologist.

Stereotactic core biopsies are a minimally invasive surgical technique. The radiologist, with the assistance of the mammography technologists, uses the stereotactic equipment to guide a biopsy needle to the exact location of the suspicious micro-calcification. Once the position of the needle is confirmed, the radiologist removes a sample of the suspicious micro-calcification. The biopsy specimen is then sent to the laboratory for analysis.

“Thirty-five of these procedures have been performed by the radiologists at NHH since December 2008 and only a small margin resulted in positive tests for cancer,” confirms Ian Moffat. As a result, the majority of the women who underwent the procedure—generally triggered by the discovery of an abnormality during routine screening—avoided more invasive surgeries they would have likely had to receive had the test not been available.

“We are very grateful for the generosity of our community—in this case, through the fund-raising efforts of the NHH Auxiliary—that permits us to purchase the necessary diagnostic equipment. As we’ve seen in the case of the stereotactic equipment, the impact on local patient care is direct.”

To book an appointment, or obtain more information, contact Northumberland Hills Hospital’s OBSP service directly at 905-377-7795. Media requests should be directed to 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, 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.