



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

## **NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Emergency Department incident – Themes from internal debriefings and early next steps**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, November 2, 2017**—While Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) has resumed normal service in its Emergency Department (ED) following a critical incident involving a weapon the night of October 27<sup>th</sup>, internal healing will take much longer.

To support that process, NHH leadership have worked this week with Chief of Cobourg Police Services Kai Liu, volunteer chaplain Andrew Truter and the hospital's Employee and Family Assistance Provider to facilitate a series of internal 'emotion' debriefings for those directly involved and for those who were not involved but who are, nevertheless, affected.

Eight sessions were held between October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 1st, with President and CEO Linda Davis, NHH Chief of Staff Dr. Mukesh Bhargava and NHH ED physicians Francesco Mulé and Jared McMillan supporting facilitation.

“As hard it has been to see and express the raw emotions felt after a traumatic incident like the one our hospital experienced the night of October 27<sup>th</sup>, it has also been helpful to begin the process of releasing some of those emotions,” said President and CEO Linda Davis. “Titles and roles were not relevant to these discussions. It was a chance for us to highlight one common bond: we're human and we're hurting, each in our own way, and we need to talk it though.”

#### **Key themes**

The presence of an active shooter inside the Emergency Department is new territory for NHH and, in fact, most hospitals in Canada. The following emerged as common themes from the eight internal debriefing sessions:

- support for those affected;
- security;
- information/communication; and
- training/education.

Sharing the themes internally was described by Davis as “the first step in the development of a go-forward plan.”

Some of this work is already under way, the first example being an expanded contract with NHH's existing Security provider, G4S Security, to increase NHH coverage to include an additional 24/7 Security Guard in the ED beginning this month. This new dedicated Emergency Department Security Guard will have the highest level of training available in private security protection.

A second action, referenced in the debriefings by Cobourg Police Chief Kai Liu, will be the introduction of joint training for staff with local police on what to do to minimize risk if a weapon is

discovered in the hospital. A commitment to develop that training has been made and planning is also under way.

Support for staff affected by this event continues to be provided, including counselling from NHH's Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) and Community Mental Health team. EAP was brought on sight to work with staff the evening of the incident and remained at the hospital through to November 1<sup>st</sup>. They will be back on site next week for those who still wish to connect in person. EAP support is available to NHH staff at any time by phone.

A further theme also emerged in the hospital team's debriefings:

- gratitude.

"As difficult as the past week has been, there is broad agreement that we have much to be grateful for as a hospital team and a community," said Davis. "At the top of this list is the quick and professional response of the Cobourg Police Services. We see our local police as family and they have told us the feeling is mutual."

"We are also grateful for the response of our own team and our partners," said Davis. "Everyone in the building that night and in the hours and days afterward played an important role in our response. Partners in our community and around the province have also been quick to reach out with offers of help. Patients, friends and colleagues have flooded us with food, coffee and messages of support. We are grateful for it all."

### **Next steps**

NHH will work with Emergency Department staff and representatives of other teams involved or affected by the incident, the NHH Occupational Health and Safety Committee, police services, the hospital's security provider and other public institutions that have also had the experience of an active shooter, on identifying and implementing actions for both the short and longer term.

Other hospitals interested in learning from NHH's experience for their own policies and practices have also reached out to NHH. The hospital will share the lessons learned in the weeks and months ahead.

"You choose to work at NHH," said Davis in the conclusion of her November 2nd memo to her team. "I appreciate, this is a choice. Please know you have, in exchange, your NHH leadership team's commitment for transparency and accountability as we all move forward together beyond this tragic incident."

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**About Northumberland Hills Hospital** – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of more than 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 approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).