



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

## NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### NHH introduces hospitalist program

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012** - On Thursday September 6<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Directors of Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) approved the introduction of a new hospitalist program in order to address challenges in declining General Practitioner (GP)<sup>1</sup> coverage for patients admitted to hospital. Hospitalists are physicians who are dedicated to provide hospital care to inpatients not covered by GPs.

NHH has experienced a steady increase in the number of GPs relinquishing their hospital privileges over the past three years. As a result, fewer GPs remain on hospital staff to carry the workload. As many Ontario hospitals facing the same challenge have determined, the solution is to introduce a hospitalist program.

The decline in GPs providing hospital work is a trend experienced in many other communities across the province and not something unique to west Northumberland. Over the past ten years, GPs in many Ontario communities have chosen not to provide hospital-based services, focusing instead on community-based primary care. The reasons for this shift in practice include:

- more generous financial incentives for community-based care as compared to hospital work;
- inadequate remuneration through the Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan (OHIP) fee schedule for GP inpatient work;
- increased complexity of hospital inpatient care due to an older population with multiple chronic conditions and health ailments;
- absence of government regulations requiring GPs to care for their patients when admitted to hospital;
- desire among younger physicians for a better work/life balance than that demanded by their predecessors; and,
- a higher overall percentage of older GPs, with many moving into semi-retirement and reducing their workload commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> General Practitioners are also referred to as Family Physicians.

Hospital operating funds are not intended to be directed to pay for physician medical services. However, in order to recruit and retain hospitalists, NHH has reallocated approximately \$270,000 of its operating budget to provide additional remuneration over and above the expected OHIP fee-for-service billings. NHH will commence recruitment for the hospitalists immediately, with an aim to have the program fully operational by the new year.

“The local GPs who continue to provide hospital services are becoming increasingly stretched as they struggle to meet the demands of community and hospital work. The remaining GPs on hospital staff are becoming burnt out and there’s less capacity and willingness to take on more orphan patients<sup>2</sup>. As a result, some patients must wait longer in the Emergency Department to be admitted for inpatient care, because it takes longer for the hospital to find a GP willing to care for an orphan patient. This is not sustainable and a new approach is required for the long-term viability of the hospital,” said Dr. David Broderick, NHH’s Chief of Staff.

Robert Biron, NHH President and CEO further emphasized, “NHH must do what is necessary to ensure patients get the care they need. This new direction was a last resort, but it has become a necessary one given our circumstances. Our GPs have provided exceptional care to our patients for many years and they continue to support key services in the hospital. We are grateful for this and hope that their commitment can be further sustained with the additional support of the new hospitalists.”

**About Northumberland Hills Hospital** – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. 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 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 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).

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<sup>2</sup> An orphan patient is a patient who is admitted to hospital and: (1) does not have a GP; (2) has a GP who does not provide hospital services; or, (3) is from another community.