



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Telemedicine Services expanding at NHH, thanks to new funding for dedicated resource, additional equipment

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, September 6th, 2012 – Two-way video conferencing technology is improving more local residents' access to specialized health care services, thanks to recent investments from the [Central East LHIN](#).

NHH is one of a number of hospitals on the receiving end of new base funding (\$63,766 for NHH for fiscal year 2012/13) to better leverage Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) technology for virtual patient consultations, assessments, training and knowledge exchange.

An independent, not-for-profit organization funded by the Ontario Government, OTN facilitates the delivery of care across its network, as well as distance education and meetings for health care professionals and patients.

While not a newcomer to OTN (NHH has been using OTN technology to support its mental health program for the past three years and for staff education purposes since 2003), clinical services will be expanded in the area of patient-to-specialist consultations.

Four telemedicine systems are now live and operational at NHH—an increase from two. NHH's first Ontario Telemedicine Coordinator, RN Patti Ley, has also been recruited and new integrated equipment to complement the systems is in place or soon to be brought online, including a patient exam camera, that could be used for live examination of wounds or incisions, a camera used to take and store pictures of dermatological conditions for assessment by a dermatologist and a digital stethoscope.

How does it work?

From the patient's perspective, a telemedicine appointment is just like a regular appointment, except that the specialist they are meeting with is on a monitor. Through a secure Virtual Private Network, real-time video and other integrated medical tools such as patient examination cameras, the Telemedicine Coordinator works with local physicians and patients to access a range of specialized Regulated Health Professionals around the province.

Typically initiated by a referral from a family doctor to one of more than 3000 health care professionals who provide care through OTN, the Coordinator sets up the OTN appointment with the patient and/or their caregiver, and is on-hand to assist both parties on the day of the consultation. Appointments occur at various locations within NHH,

including the community-based mental health program at 1011 Elgin Street West, Suite 200, and in the Ambulatory Care clinic at the main hospital location at 1000 DePalma Drive.

Through the Network, the specialist—who may be located in Oshawa, Toronto or as far away as Thunder Bay—can deliver a broad range of clinical consultations, including psychiatric assessments, neurology consultations, pre-surgical consultations and post-surgical wound inspections to name just a few.

Clinical OTN consultations are already on the rise at NHH, as word of NHH's increased capacity begins to spread through the physician community and among patients themselves.

“This is an exciting opportunity to build on NHH's previous use of OTN for mental health and educational purposes, and grow awareness and use of OTN here in our community,” said Patti Ley. “I'm part educator, part facilitator and part enabler—I'm a resource to both the patient and to the health care provider, wherever they may be. I look forward to helping more local residents reduce time and travel expenses and gain access to specialized medical expertise through this exciting, cost-effective technology.”

For general information on OTN, see www.otn.ca. For more information on OTN services available at NHH today and other networking in the works, contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.

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.