Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Narrative for Health Care Organizations in Ontario

June 1, 2023
OVERVIEW

Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. The hospital serves a catchment area known as west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 63,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope, Alderville First Nation, and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 700 people and relies on the additional support provided by over 150 physicians and midwives, and more than 500 volunteers.

In 2022, a 23-member multi-disciplinary team comprised of senior leadership, representatives from the Board of Directors, Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) partners, physicians, and front-line care providers as well as members of the Foundation and Auxiliary co-designed a collaborative consultation process aligned with our partners in the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland that led to the development of Northumberland Hills Hospital’s new Strategic Plan Framework.

Anchored around the acronym “CARE,” and grounded in a new shared purpose of ‘People First,’ the Framework set NHH on its current path to achieve four new strategic priorities:

- Connected care close to home
  Build inclusive and integrated care pathways to secure a foundation for sustainability and growth

- Accountable care
Unleash the power of technology, information, and innovation to improve experiences, efficiency and outcomes (quality and safety)

- Responsive and healthy work environment
  Create and sustain a work environment that engages, empowers and promotes positive morale.

- Exceptional care, every time, for every person
  Build a culture where each person received high-quality, reliable, whole-person care, service and support

Aligned with these new strategic priorities, NHH’s 2023-24 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is our public commitment to continuously improve quality of care and patient safety. It is supported by several related operational plans, frameworks and a Balanced Scorecard. These include the specific quality, practice, and safety initiatives for each of NHH’s patient care programs, as well as the NHH Quality and Safety and Professional Practice Frameworks, our Ethics Framework, the People Plan, and the Infection Prevention and Control Framework, ensuring consistency of focus and effort.

As noted, our shared purpose at NHH is People First. This statement reflects the central role and aspiration of this hospital. It speaks to why we exist and how we can make an impact in our community. Patients and caregivers who come to NHH should expect to consistently receive care that is safe, effective, equitable, timely, and efficient through a philosophy of person-centered care and, likewise, staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers who choose to bring their skills to NHH should expect to find a fulfilling experience.

As in past years, our QIP has also been informed by the guidelines and feedback provided by Ontario Health, patient satisfaction survey results, and the ongoing importance of monitoring efforts to reduce Alternate Level of Care. It has been strengthened by input from patients, families and caregivers, staff, physicians and midwives. And, finally, also informing our QIP are the objectives of NHH’s integrated risk management program, and best practice standards including but not limited to Accreditation Canada’s Required Organizational Practices.

Guided by our core values of integrity, quality, respect, compassion and teamwork, we are confident that NHH will achieve or make material progress against the targets set out in our 2023-24 QIP given the dedication and commitment to excellence of our staff and physicians, the engagement of our Board and leadership, and the collaboration of our dedicated PFAC and strong network of community partners.
PATIENT/CLIENT/RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERING

NHH recognizes that authentic and mutually rewarding patient, family and caregiver engagement grows from a long-term approach to ensure success as we work to develop and continually partner with patients and families. By enabling organizational level partnership and experience-based co-design through a multitude of patient and family voices, NHH will continue to evolve and expand our engagement efforts. Presently, NHH directly engages patients, families and caregivers in a variety of ways: through the input of our Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), one-on-one interviews (manager rounding, quality review meetings), meetings with patients and family members (discharge support meetings), direct feedback to the Board Quality and Safety Committee through a segment called “Through the Patient’s Eyes,” active participation in continuous quality improvement initiatives such as best practice working groups and unit or issue-based working groups and, perhaps most importantly, through our Quality and Practice Committees (QPCs). At NHH, a Patient and Family Advisor sits as an equal partner on each of our QPCs—nine in total. From April to December 2022 (9 months), PFAC partners contributed over 300 hours to supporting continuous quality improvement at NHH. This contribution has grown steadily, year over year, since the formation of our inaugural PFAC in 2016 and NHH’s PFAC is on track to spread its influence further in 2023-24 through hospital and regional tables.

PROVIDER EXPERIENCE

NHH’s staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers, like other health care professionals across Canada, have experienced unprecedented impacts due to Health Human Resource (HHR) pressures, the learning curve of new processes and procedures with the implementation of a new regional Clinical Information System (EPIC), and absenteeism due to COVID exposures, infections, and work restrictions. This undoubtedly has contributed to increase in stress and burnout. This is not a challenge unique to NHH. Monitoring the experiences of staff, physicians, and midwives, and acting on areas of concern, has remained a priority for the leadership of NHH through the pandemic. To this end, the NRC Canada Employee Engagement Survey was deployed in 2021. Following on from this, NHH undertook a “sticky note” forum, championed by our President and CEO, and the results from both highlighted the most important areas where improvements should be prioritized, as well as areas where NHH was exceeding expectations.

Carrying that work forward, the NHH 2023 People Plan Pillars are four-fold:
- Performance and Talent Management (including leadership development, talent management and succession planning)
- Service Excellence (which speaks to our goals regarding attentive service, and the advancement of technology as a critical enabler)
- Wellbeing (which encompasses our work to advance efforts to “Care for the Carers”) and
- Culture (a pillar committed to acting on recommendations related to what our healthcare providers are telling us, reward and recognition, equity/diversity/inclusion, and more)

Under the umbrella of our “Caring for the Carer” strategy, there have and continue to be targeted initiatives to care for our caregivers by meeting their physical, emotional, psychological and wellbeing needs as determined through direct feedback received,
townhalls, surveys and one-on-one discussions. NHH’s People Strategy has also renewed its focus on providing mental health support to our caregivers under a separate “Check up from the Neck Up” strategy in addition to efforts to address ethical distress inadvertently caused by increased workload and volumes, which has been enabled through the support of ethicists and the reestablishment of our ethical frameworks (accountability for reasonableness, A4R and intent vs impact). Furthermore, an interim internal “People Satisfaction” staff survey will be built, implemented, and analyzed this year to learn more about the needs of NHH staff and physicians while working toward a new shared solution with regional and other Ontario hospital partners.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

NHH is committed to addressing safety concerns of staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers; reducing the risk of workplace violence (WPV); and creating a safe environment for all. Processes are in place to minimize the risk of violence while doing all in our power to ensure safety for patients and staff alike. Additionally, WPV data is monitored by the Quality & Safety Committee of the Board, on our corporate balanced scorecard, Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC), and QPCs. Guided by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, there will be continued efforts and an enhanced focus on ensuring that all healthcare providers continue to feel safe and secure at work and understand where and how to seek help if faced with WPV or harassment. To that end, NHH is committed to reinstituting Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVCI) training via a train-the-trainer approach and enhancing the pathways for ease of staff reporting. WPV is a growing concern for smaller communities and NHH is committed to continually enhancing its efforts to minimize risk and maximize preparedness. NHH aspires to have a zero-tolerance policy.
PATIENT SAFETY

Quality and patient safety are embedded into everything we do at NHH, and "Quality" is identified as one of our core values. The NHH Quality and Safety Framework is built upon four cornerstones of quality patient care attributes: Quality, Safety, Risk Management and Performance Monitoring. In addition to these cornerstones, the NHH Quality and Safety Framework also describes four enablers for quality patient care: Culture, Leadership, Collaboration and Sustainability. By focusing on these enablers, we are maximizing the potential of our staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers to continuously provide high quality patient care. The indicators that fall within the QIP quality dimension of Safe and Effective Care will align to our organizational Patient Safety Plan for 2023/24. This year, NHH is highlighting five areas of focus and commitment:
- increase the barcode medication administration (BCMA) rate,
- increase medication reconciliation at discharge via completion of Best Possible Medication Discharge Plans (BPMD),
- reduce workplace violence,
- decrease Serious Safety Event Rate (SSER), and
- reduce the injurious inpatient falls rate (severity level 2 or higher).

Further to these efforts, NHH is committed to enhancing the pathways for ease of staff reporting on patient safety incidents of all levels of severity.

HEALTH EQUITY

NHH has an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) responsible for advising and recommending actions and proposing initiatives for the purpose of ensuring a sustainable culture of a more inclusive, more diverse, and more equitable NHH. The Committee is comprised of members that reflect strong association with diverse and minority groups and/or lived experience. The Committee has increased awareness across NHH through initiatives such as, but not limited to:
- Monthly notable dates recognition
- Delivery of numerous equity, diversity and inclusion related training, and resources to staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers
- Building and fostering relationship with Aldererville First Nation (located just a few kilometers from NHH)
- Reviewing of policies, procedures and practices from an equity diversity and inclusion related lens
- Facilitating Board generative discussions

In 2023-24, the Committee is highlighting their oversight of two indicators within the Equitable quality dimension: reports of racial harassment, and the use of the Health Equity Impact Assessment Tool to review and update organizational policies. Collecting baseline data on these indicators will allow our organization to learn more about itself and, in turn, take actions to promote health equity based on those learnings.
EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION
The performance of each senior leader is measured against leadership competencies, annual goals including those relevant to achievement of corporate objectives, the QIP and a 360-degree component that solicits feedback from a broad circle of stakeholders.

NHH Board of Directors has developed an Executive Compensation Plan to ensure the integrity of the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act 2014, Regulation 187/17 and amended Regulation 304/16. The Plan includes the development and implementation of an executive compensation framework and NHH looks forward to publishing that Plan pending Ministry approval. The plan, developed in 2017, never received approval.

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People First.

OTHER
Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) has a Continuing Medical Education (CME) Committee, where members can contribute to developing and reviewing educational programs, providing guidance on emerging healthcare trends, and supporting the ongoing growth and development of the healthcare community. This year, with oversight from the CME, NHH is taking part in the CPSO’s Quality Improvement (QI) Partnership program, which will allow hospital-based physicians to complete their QI requirements more efficiently. In addition, NHH is restarting the Mortality & Morbidity (M&M) Rounds in April 2023, using the Ottawa Model (OM3) as the guiding framework. These rounds will provide a psychologically safe environment for physicians, medical learners, and interdisciplinary staff to learn from preventable serious patient safety events and advance care at NHH.
SIGN-OFF

It is recommended that the following individuals review and sign-off on your organization’s Quality Improvement Plan (where applicable):

I have reviewed and approved our organization’s Quality Improvement Plan on **March 24, 2023**

Beth Selby, Board Chair

Starr Olsen, Board Quality Committee Chair

Susan Walsh, Chief Executive Officer

Other leadership as appropriate