



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS
HOSPITAL

Senior Leadership
Report to the Board
April 2022

Quality and Safety

Pandemic response continues as local/provincial cases rise

Testing and treatment via the COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre

With ongoing support from a multidisciplinary team of NHH staff, area primary care providers, and [Ontario Health Team of Northumberland](#) partners, the **NHH COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre** service is continuing to operate daily, 8AM to 4PM (with the exception of statutory holidays), from the portable trailer outside the NHH Emergency Department. While we had all hoped that cases of COVID-19 would continue to decline, public health officials are now warning that cases are on the rise and a 6th wave is now under way.

The following virtual and in-person supports are available through the NHH COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre to support rising COVID-19 testing and assessment needs:

- ✓ Quick, direct access to a clinician
- ✓ Alternative to the Emergency Department (ED) for those with worsening symptoms or questions regarding symptoms which *could* be COVID-19
- ✓ Booked appointments, often same day; no need to wait in the ED
- ✓ Phone-based triage option to start (often avoids the need for an in-person visit)
- ✓ On-site testing with results in approximately 24 hours (provincial eligibility for testing applies)
- ✓ Coordination of COVID-specific treatment with approved medications, including the anti-viral medication Paxlovid—which must be taken within five days of symptom onset—as applicable

While walk-ins continue to be accepted, calls and visits to the COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre have risen in recent weeks. Please CALL AHEAD to 1-905-377-7783 or toll free 1-833-678-2435 for a phone-based assessment prior to arriving on site. Visit nhh.ca/covid-centre for more information. In all urgent situations, call 911 or go directly to the nearest ED.

Reminder regarding visitor restrictions

Effective Monday, March 21, NHH further relaxed COVID-19 visitor restrictions on both inpatient units and within the Emergency Department/Short Stay Unit. A daily maximum of two visitors or essential caregivers is now permitted between the hours of 8AM to 8PM. To minimize the number of individuals in patient rooms at any one time, these two visitors will not be permitted simultaneously.

Exceptions to the two-person and 8AM to 8PM rule will continue as follows:

- For inpatients at imminent end of life additional visitors will be considered at the discretion of the care team
- For obstetrical patients, birth partner AND labour coach will be permitted
- For outpatients, the following exceptions are permitted:
 - essential caregivers for children coming to the hospital for care (children = 18 and under)
 - essential caregivers for those with communication challenges and/or cognitive impairments - outpatient settings only (Emergency Department visits, Diagnostic Imaging, etc.)

All visitors/essential caregivers continue to be required to sign in and document their contact information for purposes of contact tracing. Visitors are further required to sign OUT to support smooth administration of the one-visitor-at-a-time maximum. Visiting continues to be on hold for any inpatients whose room is located in a COVID-19 hot zone (i.e. a unit designated in a COVID-19 'outbreak' status by Public Health) OR confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19. As of the time of this Report's writing (April 4, 2022) there are no active COVID-19 outbreaks at NHH. Virtual visiting options remain available.

Our aim is to strike an appropriate balance between access to loved ones and safety for all involved. Sincere gratitude goes out to patients and visitors alike for the continued understanding and cooperation. We will monitor the situation closely, and update our Visiting Guidelines as required. For the latest details please see the [Visiting Guidelines area of our website](#) or contact our Public Affairs office at 905-377-7757.

Infection prevention measures continue, including universal masking

With COVID-19 cases on the rise in Ontario and our region, all enhanced infection control measures remain in place at NHH's main 1000 DePalma Drive site and our Community Mental Health offices on Elgin Street. While requirements may have relaxed outside of high-risk settings, hospitals have a unique responsibility to provide a safe care environment, and we know that masks are one of the most effective steps we can take to protect our patients and each other.

Visitors continue to be provided with a medical-grade mask when they pass through screening, and they are expected to wear this mask at all times in public and patient areas of the hospital, except in when eating or drinking in the Main Street Bistro.

All precautions for NHH staff, physicians and midwives also remain in place, including active screening at entrances and universal masking for all staff, physicians and volunteers.

Great Place to Work and Volunteer

Caring for the Carer update

Northumberland Hills Hospital, like other hospitals and care providers throughout the province, continues to experience critical health human resource (HHR) pressures. As reported in February, 2022 we are implementing a number of innovative strategies to address these pressures and bring relief to the team under our "Caring for the Carer" campaign, developed to ensure that the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of our carers here at NHH remains top of mind. Provincial efforts, including the nursing pay incentive announce last month, are also being monitored closely. Under this program, the government will providing a lump sum payment of up to \$5,000 for eligible full-time nurses and a prorated payment of up to \$5,000 for eligible part-time and casual nursing staff across

the province. Technical guidelines regarding the implementation of these payments have recently been released and additional details are expected from the Ministry of Health later this week.

EDIA Committee enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion through education and celebration

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) has recently started leveraging the NHH intranet, the “InfoWeb” to recognize notable dates in the monthly calendar. These short, interesting and informative write-ups are designed to promote awareness of dates and events recognized in Canada and around the world, and to share resources with those who wish to learn more.

The Committee’s inaugural post, published in February, focused on Black History Month. The March message provided information on International Women’s Day, Holi, Transgender Day of Visibility and the International Day for the Elimination of Racism while the latest message, for April 2022, featured information and related links on Ramadan, Passover, World Autism Awareness Day, Sikh Heritage Month and Earth Day.

To date the three EDIA Committee messages have received more than 170 unique page views from NHH staff, physicians and midwives.

More messages are planned on a monthly cadence for the balance of the year and will be coordinated by the Committee, under the leadership of Lola Obomighie, NHH’s VP People, Culture and Organizational Development, alongside other initiatives geared to further promote equity, diversity and inclusion throughout NHH, making it an even greater place to work and volunteer for all.

Pharmacy Appreciation Month recognized – latest in ongoing effort to recognize professions and support teams at NHH

March was Pharmacy Appreciation Month, and NHH took the opportunity to send up a shoutout to the hospital’s very dedicated pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. In addition to all their regular duties, this team has been steadfast in their support for COVID-19 vaccination efforts inside and outside the organization. More recently the pharmacy team has helped to advocate and support NHH’s expansion into the delivery of anti-viral and other COVID-19 treatments. NHH and NHH Foundation social media feeds shared images of the Pharmacy team last month, and extended thanks for their continuing commitment to all the patients we serve—a practice we continue to honour for all the many professions and support teams that make NHH the hospital it is today. Please watch our social media feeds for these special thank you messages and share your feedback and thanks. Up next is Oncology Nursing Week (April 5).

NHH Auxiliary aims to complete \$1 million pledge to NHH in 100th year

As the NHH Auxiliary gears up to celebrate its 100th year anniversary in 2023, they are also striving towards another important milestone. This dedicated team of volunteers is looking to complete a pledge of \$1 million in support of NHH’s new digital clinical information system (CIS) – the largest commitment they’ve ever made to a single project.

“We first heard of this project in 2015 and we were excited by the possibilities,” said Selena Forsyth, NHH Auxiliary Chair, in a [joint NHH/NHH Foundation and NHH Auxiliary media release](#) issued March 30. “With an understanding of the benefits the new CIS would bring to our community, the Auxiliary Executive at the time decided to help make this project a reality.”

The Auxiliary committed to directing a portion of their fundraising efforts towards the CIS, with plans to contribute \$500,000 over a five-year period, and subsequently decided to increase this to \$1 million over a ten-year period. The organization is ahead of this goal, with just over \$800 thousand already contributed to the hospital and plans for the remainder to be complete in 2023.

The NHH Auxiliary's mission is to provide effective and compassionate assistance to visitors, staff, and patients, in an environment that promotes the dignity and wellbeing of all. With approximately 255 members of all ages, the NHH Auxiliary contributes thousands of hours of service to the hospital each year, by supporting patient care in 15 different areas throughout NHH, creating and selling handcrafted items, and operating two retail operations – *The Little Treasure Shop*, located inside the hospital, and *Petticoat Lane*, located on Munroe Street in Cobourg.

Many volunteer roles within the hospital itself have been paused and adjusted at times throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to the evolving protocols necessary for infection prevention and control, and the two retail operations have similarly adjusted operations in response to public health guidelines. Despite challenges faced, this volunteer-based organization remains dedicated to supporting NHH and in 2023, will celebrate its 100th year of helping to support quality health care in west Northumberland

For more information on how you can support NHH, visit www.nhhfoundation.ca. For information on ways to get involved with the NHH Auxiliary, visit www.nhh.ca/Volunteers/NHHAuxiliary. For information on hospital services and supports, please visit www.nhh.ca

Health Professions Scholarships to be presented in June

Applications for the annual Health Professions Scholarship awards have now closed and NHH wishes to thank the many local students who put forward applications. Introduced by the hospital in 2003, the purpose of the Scholarship Program is to provide financial assistance to students from west Northumberland who are pursuing a career in the health care sector. Applicants are evaluated on the basis of their academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, a testimonial explaining their interest in a health-care field and written references. We look forward to announcing the winners at the June Board meeting!

Collaborative Community Partnerships

Collaborative strategic planning underway, in partnership with Ontario Health Team of Northumberland

Equipped with the learnings of the past two years, the strengths developed through our hospital's previous strategic plan, and a strong desire to grow together and move forward beyond the pandemic, NHH has launched a planning process to produce its next strategic plan.

A five-month journey of consultation, reflection and priority setting, the process has been named ***Growing Together, Our Future is Your Future*** by our Strategic Planning Collaborative Action Team (SPCAT), a 23-member multi-disciplinary team of hospital, volunteer and patient/caregiver representatives led by Susan Walsh, President and CEO, and Pam Went, Board Chair, Executive Sponsors.

The SPCAT has been meeting since February to prepare an engagement plan that is now being implemented, gathering input from internal stakeholders across the hospital with an aim to develop a plan that is truly co-designed by patients, caregivers, providers, volunteers and partners. A mix of tactics is being used to hear from as many perspectives as possible through a combination of targeted conversations and interviews, a survey and focus groups. When finished in late June, 2022, the new strategic plan will set clear priorities for the hospital for the next three to five years to ensure NHH is as well positioned as possible to exceed the healthcare needs of our growing community while being a truly great place to work and volunteer.

A concurrent Northumberland-wide community consultation—with the patients and families we serve, our local health and community care partners and other providers and future users of our services—is being coordinated at the same time as our internal NHH consultation process. The findings of that consultation will also inform NHH's new strategic plan.

This innovative regional effort to leverage a single community consultation process to inform the strategic plans of multiple organizations is another example of the commitment by NHH and all OHT-N partners to enhance coordination across care partners, as intended with the Province first launched the OHT model in 2019.

Like our internal consultation process, strategies are in place to ensure the external OHT-N consultation is inclusive of a diversity of voices. Community members have many ways to have a say in the regional process (and, by extension, NHH planning) including community conversations, a survey, targeted focus groups and more.

In addition to consulting with our internal and external stakeholders, NHH's strategic planning process will involve the collection and analysis of quantitative data—our own and that of our partners--pertinent to future planning. Find more about opportunities to participate in the OHT-N strategic planning process at www.ohtnorthumberland.ca or follow the OHT-N on Facebook and Twitter. Updates on NHH's strategic planning process will follow through our own communication channels as we move forward.

Operational Excellence

NHH applauds province's announcement that temporary hospital beds opened during the pandemic will be made permanent

Overall occupancy levels throughout NHH remain consistently over 120 per cent while health human resource shortages—strained by COVID-19 and other pressures—continue, making for an unprecedented capacity challenge as Ontario enters the 6th wave of this prolonged pandemic.

On March 29 [the province announced that 3,100 temporary hospital beds created during the pandemic are to be made permanent](#). As noted by the Ontario Hospital Association, this welcome news represents the largest one-time increase in Ontario hospital capacity since the late 1990s.

NHH joins the Ontario Hospital Association in celebrating the latest investment in hospital capacity and encouraging the province to sustain this while investing in needed community and long-term care supports.

High occupancy levels at NHH are being driven by a mix of factors which require a mix of solutions to address: highest ever levels of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients (close to 50 percent of NHH's

funded 112 inpatient beds are currently in use by patients designated 'ALC') and continuing high levels of admissions via the Emergency Department as patient acuity climbs.

The NHH Emergency Department found itself in a "Code Gridlock" late last week—a situation in which inpatient bed needs exceed existing capacity. Additional gridlock pressures are anticipated in the days and months ahead as long-term growth solutions are implemented.

Celebrating our new digital Clinical Information System and recognizing the many souls who made it possible

An internal celebration date has been set to acknowledge the end of the implementation phase of NHH's transformation to Epic, the new digital Clinical Information System (CIS) NHH launched on December 3 together with six other Central East region hospital partners.

The NHH event, coordinated by an interdisciplinary 'spirit' committee, will be an opportunity to show appreciation to the entire NHH team which has made the implementation of Epic possible. There will be peer-to-peer recognition, music, thank you speeches by our leadership team and take away treats using what are now very familiar pandemic-approved practices.

NHH is in the third of four phases of our CIS transformation, namely: preparation, implementation, stabilization (the phase we are in now) and, finally, optimization. The achievement of this milestone in the midst of a prolonged pandemic and health human resource shortage is without precedent and we look forward to being able to recognize and thank all involved later this month.

NHH's Diagnostic Imaging department recognized for national leadership in innovative green program to recover precious iodine

GE Healthcare, maker of diagnostic imaging equipment that supports critical imaging devices like computed tomography (CT) and X-ray, has been recycling iodine-based contrast media for European health care facilities since 2006. In the last year it has worked to expand that program into Canada and NHH was recently profiled by the company for being one of the first hospitals in the country to accept the challenge and participate.

"We're always looking for initiatives to make ourselves greener," said Ian Moffat, NHH's Director of Diagnostic Imaging and Laboratory Services, and this turned out to be an easy addition to the department's sustainability program.

As explained in an article profiling NHH's involvement on GE Healthcare's website late last month, "Contrast media is a substance injected into the body to enhance medical imaging. Iodine, a mineral extracted primarily from soil, rock and brine, is commonly used in contrast media for both CT and X-ray imaging.... The recycling program initially launched in Norway, where GE Healthcare's Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) facility in Lindesnes produces iodine contrast-media products. GE Healthcare now offers this recycling program in 11 European countries, and last year expanded it into Canada and the United States."

Iodine is a nonrenewable resource and, according to GE, only about 18% of the current global demand is being reused.

NHH is proud to be one of 15 sites in Canada now using the program, which started in the spring of 2021. To read more about this very unique collaboration contributing to the growing circular economy, see the full article here: <https://www.gehealthcare.ca/en-CA/article/recycling-iodine-how-hospitals-are-keeping-contrast-media-in-the-circular-economy>