



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS  
**HOSPITAL**

Senior Leadership  
Report to the Board  
June 2022

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**Quality and Safety**

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**Pandemic response**

***COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre update***

With ongoing support from a multidisciplinary team of NHH staff and [Ontario Health Team of Northumberland](#) partners, including area primary care providers and Northumberland County Paramedics, the **NHH COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre** service is continuing to operate from the portable trailer outside the NHH Emergency Department.

Walk-in appointments are no longer accepted as the hours of operation have been adjusted to meet reduced demand. Area residents are reminded to please CALL AHEAD to 1-905-377-7783 or toll free 1-833-678-2435 for a phone-based assessment and pre-scheduled appointment. Visit [nhh.ca/covid-centre](http://nhh.ca/covid-centre) for more information. In all urgent situations, call 911 or go directly to the nearest ED.

***Staff/physician/midwife cases continue to decline***

The number of staff, physicians and midwives unable to work due to COVID-19 is much improved compared to this time two months ago. With a peak of 40+ individuals unable to work, that number has trended steadily downward and sits, at the time of this Report's printing, at less than five, a positive sign indeed.

Vigilance in terms of personal monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 continues to ensure no one with symptoms presents at work. Entry into the building now serves as attestation that staff, physicians and midwives are symptom free. Should symptoms or close contact exposure to a positive case occur, staff, physicians and midwives work with NHH Occupational Health and Safety on appropriate next steps.

***Universal masking continues!***

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 NHH continues to require visitors to wear this mask at all times in public and patient areas of the hospital, except when eating or drinking in the Main Street Bistro. The mask mandate is also applicable to individuals visiting the community mental health program offices.

Precautions for NHH staff, physicians and midwives also remain in place. By entering the building staff now passively attest to self-screening for any symptoms of COVID and universal masking remains in place for all staff, physicians and volunteers.

### ***Reminder regarding visitor restrictions***

NHH continues to permit a daily maximum of two visitors or essential caregivers between the hours of 8AM to 8PM. To minimize the number of individuals in patient rooms at any one time, these two visitors are not permitted simultaneously.

Exceptions to the two-person and 8AM to 8PM rule 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 reminded that they must 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. We continue to monitor the COVID situation and will 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.

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## **Great Place to Work and Volunteer**

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### **NHH welcomes Rural Ontario Medicine Students to their annual tour**

NHH was pleased to welcome four medical students this week, all from the University of Ottawa. The students are visiting the hospital and surrounding community from May 30 through June 2 for Rural Health Week, an annual initiative coordinated by province's Rural Ontario Medicine Program (ROMP).

Special thanks to Dr. Emma Smith, family physician with the Northumberland Family Health Team and Medical Trainee Physician Lead for NHH, who is leading this year's Rural Health Week visit and—with the Medical Affairs office—will support the week-long elective experience offered to pre-clerkship medical students on summer break.

The goal of Rural Medicine Week is to offer medical students hands on clinical experiences in rural centres by exposing them to medical practices outside the academic setting while, at the same time, highlighting the unique lifestyle offered by the rural community in which they are staying.

## **Caring for the Carer/People Strategy update**

NHH, like other hospitals and care providers throughout the province, continues to experience critical health human resource (HHR) pressures. Despite this, we remain focused on our multi-faceted efforts to also **care for the carers**.

In our April Board update, we highlighted some of the efforts being taken to show this support for the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of our carers. We continue with these efforts and in addition have recently established an interdisciplinary Caring for the Carers Engagement Committee. This Committee, which includes our former social committee and values ambassadors, will help to drive the **“hear me”** pillar of our caring for the carers people strategy as we continue to implement responsive initiatives and strategies that align with the care that we feel for our carers.

As well, NHH has renewed its focus on the continuous professional development of our staff and leaders. From the Employee Experience Survey, and the sticky note forum conducted by the President and CEO last year, we heard very clearly about the interest in continuous professional development. We have listened and are now in action mode implementing initiatives to address the top themes gleaned from staff, volunteers, midwives and physicians. Of note is the leadership network development coaching sessions that will be rolled out this month.

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

Northumberland Hills Hospital is steadily progressing its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion agenda through the hard work and careful thought of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC). The foundational building blocks of the agenda are hinged on awareness, education and creating a culture of belonging and inclusion for all staff, volunteers, visitors, patients, physicians, and midwives. The EDIAC continues to leverage our internal communication channels and, as appropriate, external communication channels to share messages and actively engage in notable dates and events as they arise, with Pride Month and National Indigenous Heritage Month being our focus for June, 2022.

## **Accreditation “show what you know”**

Northumberland Hills Hospital is looking forward to our next Accreditation visit coming up in September, 2022. Quoting the slogan that is energizing us, the hospital is in full preparedness to “show what we know”!

## **Physiotherapy Month latest in series of internal and external salutes recognizing professions throughout NHH**

May was National Physiotherapy Month, and NHH took the opportunity to send a thank you to the hospital’s very dedicated physiotherapists and physiotherapy assistants. In combination with NHH’s internal intranet, NHH and NHH Foundation social media feeds continue to recognize hospital teams and/or individuals in step with their specific provincial or national days. Among the professions recognized in May were National Hospice Palliative Care Week (May 1 to 7), Doctors’ Day (May 1), International Day of the Midwife (May 5), National Nursing Week (May 9-15) and International Nurses Day (May 12), PSW Day (May 19) and International Human Resources Day (May 20). Additional professionals and days were recognized in April with continued high engagement, including Administrative Professionals (April 27). Thanks to all who have helped us to spotlight these teams by engaging with our social media posts and sharing them through your own networks!

## **Patient and Family Advisory Council seeking patient partners**

Have you or your loved ones received care from NHH in the past three years? Do you have an interest in being a part of hospital decision making in a manner that reflects NHH's core values of integrity, quality, respect, compassion and teamwork? The Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) has a number of volunteer opportunities you may want to consider!

Established at NHH in December 2016, this Council is now in its sixth year. Through the volunteer Council, patient and caregiver partners are active in all core patient care areas of the hospital, working as partners with NHH staff, managers, physicians and the Board of Directors on a wide variety of hospital activities, special projects and program-focused quality and practice committees.

The PFAC is one of many ways NHH works together with patients and caregivers to continuously enhance the quality of care from the perspective of those who receive care. "NHH has benefitted from many generous PFAC volunteers over the years who have shared their lived experience, input and time. These individuals have played a key role enhancing the care experience at NHH in many ways, large and small, and we are committed to continually recruiting new Advisors to sustain and expand this important work.

The PFAC has three opportunities that require dedicated support in the following areas:

- Maternal/Child Care
- Community Mental Health and Addictions
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

For full details, including a link to the Expression of Interest form, please see [the related media release on our website at nhh.ca](#). Questions? Reach out to Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757.

## **Canada flag lowered to half-mast in honour of colleague lost to cancer**

On Tuesday, May 24, the Canada flag in front of NHH flew at half-mast in honour of a respected colleague and friend, Jessica McFayden Ferguson who passed away following a battle with cancer.

A devoted mother and daughter, Jessica, who was affectionally known to her clients and colleagues as 'Jess,' was a Case Manager and valued member of NHH's Community Mental Health Services team since 2017.

Jess will be remembered by her colleagues for having an incredible sense of humour matched evenly by an ability to connect people through the happiness she exuded every day.

Jennifer Cox, NHH's Vice President of Integrated Care, spoke about Jess's impact on the organization, saying "Jessica was a force of positivity and the utmost example of teamwork. She embodied the values of respect, integrity, and compassion. Jessica found a passion working on our Community Mental Health team and caring for this underserved population. The wonderful impact of knowing Jess will be felt by all members of our Community Mental Health team and by so many individuals and their loved ones in our community."

Deepest sympathy is extended from everyone at NHH to Jess's parents, children and friends. Memories and condolences continue to be shared via the [online obituary here](#). A celebration of life will follow at a later date.

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## Collaborative Community Partnerships

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### ***ER 101 - Tips and tricks for your Emergency Room visit the subject of latest PACE talk***

The Northumberland PACE Talk series continued on Wednesday, May 25 with an excellent presentation and discussion led by Dr. Paul Ketov, Chief of the Emergency Department and Acute Services at NHH.

Dr. Ketov is passionate about patient education and community outreach, as he truly believes that collaborative communication with patients is a fundamental part of healthcare. His talk, titled “ER 101 for Patients and Families: Tips and Tricks for Your Emergency Room Visit,” provided unique insight into the experience of visiting the Emergency Department, including different roles of the healthcare and allied health professionals who patients and caregivers might encounter. He explored the triage, investigation, discharge, and follow-up processes, addressed wait times, and highlighted how his team is continuously working to coordinate a positive patient experience. Attendees went away with both tips to help make a visit to the Emergency Department smoother and more efficient, and with recommendations for how to effectively collaborate with primary care providers, specialists, and community pharmacists after a visit.

In addition to being the current Chief of Emergency Department and Acute Services at NHH, Dr. Ketov is a recipient of several NHH Foundation Gifts of Gratitude as well as an NHH Healing Hands Award. In recent years, he has been heavily involved as one of the leaders in establishing local COVID-19 protocols, as they relate to Acute Care, and integrating the new Epic clinical information system within the Emergency Department. He is an Adjunct Professor at Queens University and is passionate about clinical education, bedside teaching, and evidence-based Emergency Medicine. He is an organizer as well as an occasional speaker for internal Clinical Education and Rounds series colloquially known as Fireside Chats.

As is standard within the PACE Talk format, questions from the audience were addressed and the presentation went beyond its planned one-hour timeframe in order to answer all.

Find the recording of this and previous PACE talks at [www.pacetalks.com](http://www.pacetalks.com) The season will resume in the fall! Watch for details from the PACE partners, including NHH, in the months ahead.

### **NHH and OPP partner to offer concentrated M-HEART services in the Municipality of Brighton**

A successful partnership between local police services and community mental health providers will now be offering additional focused support for the Municipality of Brighton.

M-HEART (Mental Health Engagement and Response Team) combines supports within the justice and health care systems to collaboratively assist individuals with mental illness and/or addictions.

A Community Safety and Policing Grant Application has secured an additional 20 hours a week for service by an M-HEART Registered Nurse in the Municipality of Brighton. The Community Safety and Policing Grant Application was secured through the Ministry of the Solicitor General. The application was put forth by the Brighton Police Service Board in partnership with the Northumberland OPP and NHH.

Introduced to the region in the spring of 2018, M-HEART has been operational five days per week in partnership with the Northumberland OPP, Port Hope Police Service, and the Cobourg Police Service, to improve mental health supports across Northumberland County.

OPP Mental Health Liaison Officers currently are accompanied by a full-time mental health Registered Nurse to jointly and proactively provide services with respect to mental health and/or addiction issues in Northumberland OPP's detachment areas.

The M-HEART Registered Nurses work in tandem with their policing partners, providing the community with client-centered and trauma-informed mental health nursing care to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. This can include consultation in crisis intervention and helping to determine a therapeutic course of action in a crisis. The M-HEART Registered Nurse is able to perform mental health assessments and facilitate a seamless transition to medical facilities. The M-HEART Registered Nurse is able to participate in the ongoing assessment of the client, where they can provide follow up consultations and assistance in connecting the client and their families to available community resources for basic needs, emergency services, crisis services and other services deemed appropriate for the individual client's needs. The aim is to support the longer term stabilization of a vulnerable population within our communities, and collaboratively develop treatment that includes client directed goals.

“Since its launch, M-HEART has become an integral service for the residents of Northumberland County,” said Jennifer Cox, NHH Vice President, Integrated Care, in joint announcement with the OPP May 13, 2022. “It has provided valuable opportunities to bring supports directly to individuals in need, while mitigating potential barriers caused by system navigation, transportation, or other existing factors that prevent delivery of care. We are elated to expand M-HEART into Brighton and continue this beneficial collaboration with Northumberland OPP.”

“With a concentrated focus in Brighton, our goal is to continue offering mental health services that residents feel comfortable accessing,” added Emma Taylor, NHH Integrated Director, Mental Health Community Programs and Services. “The success of M-HEART’s expansion will be strengthened by promoting awareness and accessibility of these services among our targeted demographics.”

“The Northumberland OPP is excited to have increased M-HEART services in Brighton and the surrounding area. The additional hours will complement the tremendous service that M-HEART brings to our communities,” said Detachment Commander, Inspector Jeff Martin.

### **Pedal for Hope – Cops for Cancer makes stop at NHH**

NHH staff gathered outside the Chemo/Dialysis units on May 19 to cheer on local police participating in the annual Pedal For Hope-Cops For Cancer cycling event. Every year, Pedal For Hope-Cops For Cancer is coordinated by area police services to raise funds for pediatric cancer research. NHH was thrilled to be included on the team’s stop this year, which included a special surprise from local student Kendra, who bravely donated her beautiful hair to help create wigs for pediatric cancer patients!

### **Collaborative strategic planning work continues, in partnership with Ontario Health Team of Northumberland**

Progress on our five-month journey of consultation, reflection and priority setting continues as we work toward NHH’s next strategic plan, in close collaboration with our regional partners in the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N)!

Work is happening in two parallel streams: external consultation and discovery, at a regional level, led by the OHT-N, and internal hospital consultation and discovery, which was led by our SPCAT, a 23-member multi-disciplinary Strategic Planning Collaborative Action Team of hospital, volunteer and

patient/caregiver representatives led by Susan Walsh, President and CEO, and Pam Went, Board Chair, Executive Sponsors.

In both cases, the exploration phase is now complete and we are in the consolidation phase, reviewing the wealth of information gathered and identifying the strengths and opportunities that we will want to capture in both the regional strategic priorities and our own NHH priorities, unique to us.

Agreement on a number of NHH strengths has emerged from the consultation. These include:

- Caring compassionate staff
- Nimbleness/agility
- Openness, collaborative and proactive nature
- Community feel
- Volunteers who are welcomed and valued at NHH
- Hospital that is well equipped thanks to a strong foundation
- Good spectrum of services
- Close-knit, professional team

Opportunities have emerged as well, and these have been divided into hospital-level (the opportunities NHH will want to explore) and regional/system level (opportunities that surfaced through our internal NHH consultations that will require further discussion with regional partners as part of the regional collaborative planning process).

Opportunities at the hospital level identified thus far in the process include:

- Improving the ED experience/finding better ways to meet primary care needs for those attend to the ED because they have no other option
- Augmenting mental health and addiction services
- Better meeting the needs of region's homeless population, and better integrating the social determinants of health into all care planning – listening better to the voices of people who have no representation
- Use technology better, and education patients and caregivers more consistently
- Restoring our great place to work by finding 'fun' again and an 'everyone has to be ok' ethos, including the re-introduction of pre-COVID things, opportunities to use education dollars, etc.
- Retention – concerted effort to support and minimize burn out as we emerge from the pandemic

Opportunities at the regional/system level through the NHH consultation process include:

- Coordination across the OHT with shared goals and accountability for patient experiences and outcomes
- A need for creative solutions to resolve alternative level of care challenges, including the addition of more long-term care capacity
- Navigation support/simplicity in the system

Thank you to all who have taken the time to participation in the consultation and reflection phases to date! Updates on the regional process will follow in the coming weeks through the OHT-N channels, including the OHT-N website, [www.ohtnorthumberland.ca](http://www.ohtnorthumberland.ca). Updates on NHH's strategic planning process will follow through our own communication channels as we move forward through the consolidation phase and onward to our new strategic plan!

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## Operational Excellence

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### **NHH President and CEO highlights issues top-of-mind for hospitals and NHH in direct letter to all candidates**

In the lead up to the 2022 provincial election, President and CEO Susan Walsh took the opportunity to reach out directly to all local candidates with a personal letter highlighting the issues top of mind for hospitals. See below for the message shared.

*May 20, 2022*

*Dear candidates,*

*Health care is top of mind for all Ontarians, and hospitals play a critical role in the delivery of that care.*

*As President and CEO of Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), I am reaching out in advance of the 2022 provincial election next month to express my personal gratitude to each of you for your commitment to community service and the residents of Northumberland-Peterborough South at this important time in our province's history.*

*I have the privilege to lead an exceptionally committed, caring and hard-working team of care providers and support staff at NHH. On behalf of this team, I want to share some insight into two key issues important to hospitals and, by extension, the communities we serve: health human resources and capacity pressures.*

#### **Health human resources**

*For more than two years, NHH has leaned hard into the pandemic response, working daily to meet the needs of patients and their families, supporting other sectors and collaborating with our partners in order to keep local residents safe from COVID-19.*

*While the sixth wave appears, fortunately, to be waning, and the number of daily infections is in decline in Ontario, overall health system capacity remains a significant concern as is the need to protect, sustain and renew Ontario's precious health human resources.*

*System capacity is typically gauged by beds, occupancy rates and wait times... all of which are directly related to funding levels. Staffing availability, however, has become the critical capacity-limiting factor for hospitals and other health-system partners, such as long-term care and home care, and we do not expect this issue to go away when the pandemic finally ends.*

*The pandemic magnified our vulnerabilities, among them the long-standing concerns about future health care workforce supply, projections for retirement, and mental health and burnout. Some of my peers have had to make the difficult decision to partially close their emergency departments and other core services due to the fact they simply did not have enough available staff to safely deliver care. It is clear that workforce supply shortages are at a critical point.*

#### **Capacity pressures**

*When the pandemic arrived in March 2020, hospitals across the province were forced to reschedule and postpone many surgeries and other non-urgent services to free up capacity. Today, many are still working through backlogs of cancellations or delayed bookings due to the pandemic.*



*While we have seen welcome increases in funding to better match patient need—including increases in intensive care bed funding—occupancy rates at NHH remain well above our funded capacity. Though our current base funded capacity is 104 beds, we regularly operate at over 120 per capacity, and even as high as 140 per cent capacity, as we hit earlier this week, significantly above the April 2022 occupancy rate for Ontario acute care hospitals of 94%.*

*Emergency department (ED) volumes have returned to pre-pandemic levels and patients continue to experience long waits in the ED, receiving far less timely care than we want to provide. In January of this year, 10 per cent of admitted patients waited in Ontario EDs for 44 hours or longer—a record high and a wait none of us would want a loved one to endure.*

*Hospitals continue to face significant capacity pressures due to challenges across what we call ‘the continuum of care.’ In other words, the services beyond our hospital walls. Recently the number of patients waiting in Ontario hospitals for a more appropriate level of care (ALC), such as home and community care and long-term care, reached an all-time high of nearly 5,800 souls. Here at NHH, as I type this, some 40 souls are designated ALC, to no fault of their own.*

*Hospitals and the health care system entered the pandemic in a state of under-capacity and misaligned resources and services.*

*Historically, on a per capita basis, Ontario hospitals have had very low numbers of beds compared to other provinces and countries. Ontario had the same number of hospital beds at the start of the pandemic as it did 20 years ago, with a population that has grown by 2.8 million people!*

*In the 2021/22 Ontario Budget, the government committed to an additional \$5.1 billion investment in hospital support since the onset of the pandemic and the creation of more than 3,100 new temporary hospital beds. Recently, the Ontario government announced that these temporary beds would be made permanent. This is the single largest one-time increase in Ontario hospital capacity since the late-1990s. Ontario hospitals are grateful for these investments, because they provide additional funded beds to better meet the needs of the patients we exist to serve.*

*Despite these commitments, health system capacity remains a very serious problem for Ontario. There is much more work to do. Regardless of which party the people of Ontario elect in June, the following must be addressed:*

- *Ensure that hospitals and the wider health care system are supported with the financial resources to meet the needs of Ontario’s growing and aging population and ensure that Ontario has enough health care professionals and workers to provide care in hospitals and other settings.*
- *Build off the momentum of recent investments with long-term health services capacity planning*

*Exciting things are happening in Northumberland, where our “Team Northumberland” culture is proving to be a key advantage, in a pandemic and beyond. In collaboration with our partners in the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland ([www.ohtnorthumberland.ca](http://www.ohtnorthumberland.ca)), and a diverse network of local residents, NHH is conducting community consultations to support local hospital and health system strategic planning that will help focus energy and resources where it is needed most in the years ahead. This collaborative, grass-roots planning is unique and very inspiring.*

*Thank you for taking time to read this. I would be pleased to meet with each of you, one-on-one, as your schedule permits, to discuss all of the above, answer questions and share further examples of why these issues are important to Northumberland-Peterborough South. Please reach out to me directly if you would like to set up a meeting.*

*I wish you and your family the very best through this election period, I thank you for your commitment to public service and look forward to the continuation of strong working relationship with our government supported and enabled by our local MPP.*

*Susan Walsh,  
President and CEO  
Northumberland Hills Hospital*

*cc Pam Went, Chair, NHH Board of Directors*

### **Special ballot hosted at NHH May 18 to support admitted patients in casting their vote for the provincial election**

NHH once again provided the opportunity for inpatients to vote in advance of the provincial election with a Special Ballot coordinated on **Wednesday, May 18, 2022**.

Pre-information was distributed on patient food trays and place settings in the Rehabilitation and Restorative Care dining rooms. Interested patients were required to call the local Elections Ontario office to pre-register for the special ballot and on date assigned to NHH Special Ballot Coordinator, Amy Foston, came on site to provide patients with their ballot and return it to Elections Ontario. As in the past, **no voting is available to hospital in-patients on election day**, due to the advance notice required.

While the number of admitted patients who choose to vote from their hospital bed remains small, the opportunity is important. Sincere thanks to Election Ontario, Ann MacDonald, Returning Officer for Northumberland Peterborough South, and local Special Ballot coordinator Amy Fosten for ensuring another smooth process with this important service to patients.