

HEART BEATS

Fall 2021

Message from the President

We're coming up to two years since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and this health crisis remains a top priority, particularly now that the highly contagious Delta strain is upon us – with younger patients becoming extremely ill. Unfortunately, the level of vaccination is not nearly what it should be.

The story opposite, featuring our infection control expert consultant Dr. Karim Ali, provides a snapshot of what is now occurring and the rationale for all eligible people to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

The pandemic is putting a tremendous strain on the health care system. Patients coming to our Emergency Department are sicker than before – having put off their health concerns during the various phases of COVID lockdown, and/or dealing with mental health issues that have been exacerbated by isolation and the lack of social support.

Workers in hospitals are tired of the ongoing fight against the virus. People are choosing to leave the health care field altogether, causing staff shortages in all departments. The shortage of nursing staff is particularly problematic, as outlined in the story on page 2.

Yet we at the hospital and Edgewater Gardens must carry on. The construction of our new Admitting and Outpatient Areas is complete. We are now awaiting the delivery of furniture, which is taking longer than usual due to supply chain and transportation disruptions during the pandemic.

We continue to engage with the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care on the expansion of Edgewater Gardens, and expect the process for various levels of approval will take a couple of years at least. We will be engaging with the Dunnville Hospital and Healthcare Foundation to help raise funds for this important project, to ensure we can

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The Case for the COVID Vaccine

Haldimand-Norfolk has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the province for COVID-19, with significant numbers of people still choosing not to get the jab. In mid-September just under 68 per cent of residents had received at least one vaccine dose, compared to the provincial average of nearly 75 per cent.

Dr. Karim Ali, director of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Niagara Health and a consultant to HWMH, is urging people to get the vaccine, saying concerns about the speed of the vaccine's development and its safety are unwarranted.

“This has been the largest immunization campaign in the history of mankind,” he notes, adding that the development of the vaccines approved for the virus is the result of an unprecedented worldwide effort among the scientific community.

“Rigorous studies were undertaken with all clinical trials completed,” he emphasizes, noting that while hundreds of vaccine candidates were developed, only a handful ended up being approved for use.

Dr. Ali explains that unvaccinated people don't begin to develop antibodies to the virus until seven to 10 days have passed after infection, by which time they may already be quite ill after exposure to COVID. On the other hand, those who've had the vaccine are able to ramp up antibody production very quickly. Numerous studies make it clear that vaccine-induced immunity is superior to immunity acquired through infection.

The result is that unvaccinated people have a much higher chance of ending up in the



ICU and on a ventilator. As an example, on Sept 12, 2021, all five patients admitted to the ICU with severe COVID-19 at Niagara Health were unvaccinated. “We keep seeing this again and again – people holding off on being vaccinated and then having regrets when they become really sick. The delta variant of the virus will find you; it's very contagious,” he warns.

“I've seen young people who've suffered devastating strokes that have changed their lives forever.”

Dr. Ali considers how lucky Canadians are when such a large part of the world's population still doesn't have access to the COVID vaccine. He recalls the day back in mid-January when he administered the first shot of a COVID vaccine. This was the same day he got a telephone call from his family in Pakistan, with the news that his dad, mom and sister-in-law had symptoms of the virus. They became quite ill with COVID, along with two aunts and an uncle who ended up in the ICU.

“I've never felt so helpless in all my life,” he says, being an infectious diseases expert who was unable to care for his own family.

Pakistan and most lower, middle-income countries continue to face a shortage of vaccines for their populations.

HWMH Challenged by Shortage of Nurses

As is the case across most of the world, Haldimand War Memorial Hospital is facing a shortage of nurses to care for its patients. The situation is particularly acute for smaller community hospitals such as HWMH.

Vice-president and chief nursing officer Devon Inglis explains that a shortage of nurses existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the problem has become even worse now. She says this is due to a combination of factors.

The pandemic has caused some older workers in general to re-evaluate their lives and retire early. Others have decided to leave their jobs in favour of ones that allow them to work remotely, or have chosen to leave health care all together.

Many young women in nursing have taken maternity leaves after deciding the pandemic provided a good opportunity to add to their families, while some nurses have moved to communities and jobs that offer higher pay rates. Then there's the burnout that nurses have been facing as a result of extra stressors and workloads resulting from the pandemic.

In mid-September HWMH had six nursing vacancies, including four of the 11 full-time nursing positions assigned to the hospital's Emergency Department.

"We've always relied on student nursing placements for recruitment," Devon says, "but those placements did not happen during the pandemic." She notes that larger hospitals had the ability to entice graduating nurses with signing bonuses while some health care agencies were offering higher salaries than hospitals.

The salary range for nurses at HWMH, depending on experience and based on union agreements, is \$65,000 to \$93,000 for RNs and \$55,000 to \$59,000 for RPNs.

While applications to nursing schools had declined prior to the pandemic, there is a waitlist in Ontario now. The problem is that nursing schools have not been provided with adequate government funding to train the additional candidates. Also, it will take three to four years for nursing students to complete their training before being able to work in the profession.

While nursing recruitment efforts are underway at HWMH, Devon says she is reallocating nursing resources to deal with the staffing shortfall – a strategy that's much easier to implement in a large hospital with its greater staff complement than a small community one.

Staff, including Devon herself, have been reassigned to front-line work in the past couple of months, taking on shifts in the Emergency Department, when there was insufficient nursing coverage.

She says it seems likely the nursing shortage at HWMH and elsewhere will persist for several years to come.



Maintenance and Engineering director Tim Baker (left) and electrician Jon Miller inspect the construction work in the waiting room of the new Outpatient area.

Message from the President – continued from page 1 –

continue to look after those people in our area who need long-term care.

Our next edition of HeartBeats comes out in early January 2022. It's my sincere hope that we will have much better news to report on the health care front.

Meanwhile, as the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays approach, I want to wish the members of our community all the best for a healthy and happy fall and holiday season.

Sharon Moore, President and CEO

Residents Enjoy the Fruits of the Fall Season

EDGEWATER GARDENS NEWS



Edgewater Gardens residents participated in a range of activities over the course of a week in September to celebrate the fall season, including preparing and enjoying baked apples. Pictured above are recreation therapy assistant Kelly Popoff with resident Hazel Buck.

Diane's Work Comes Full Circle

After dealing with boredom and a lack of socialization during the pandemic, Diane Harrison went back to work at Edgewater Gardens doing a job that first brought her to the home 14 years ago – as a personal support worker.

After several years employment as a hairdresser, Diane upgraded her skills to become a PSW and began working part-time at Edgewater in 2007. Upon the retirement of the home's hairdresser 10 years later, she returned to hair styling, serving its residents.

The closure of hair salons over the past year-and-a-half due to pandemic restrictions included the salon at Edgewater. So Diane found herself out of work.

"I'd done everything at my house that could be done," she says. "I couldn't take being at home and doing nothing."

After several months, she managed to get a part-time job as a PSW again, and also doing haircuts part-time when the pandemic restrictions were lifted.

"It's been great – I love it," Diane says of her two roles at Edgewater. "I feel compelled to help the people there because they're like my family."

During her layoff, residents showed their affection for Diane by signing a petition to bring her back as a hairdresser.

"It took me two weeks of long days to get caught up," she says of the pent-up demand for her haircutting services. "It's been such a good feeling to make people feel pretty again."

Diane lives in Dunnville with her partner Kevin and 24-year-old biological son, who is a fourth-year student at Brock University – as well as a teenaged foster son and a young woman, who have been living with the family through programs operated by the Children's Aid Society and Community Living Haldimand.

Over the past decade, Diane and Kevin have cared for 70 foster children, some for



Diane Harrison with resident Gail Cole.

EMPLOYEE & MEDICAL STAFF PROFILE

just a few days and others for several years. As many as four foster kids have stayed with the family at any one time.

Several former foster children come back to visit from time to time, with one of them now employed with Kevin's pool company.

"We show them love and give them space," Diane says.

New Chair and Board Members for HWMH and EG

The Boards of Directors of the hospital and Edgewater Gardens have a new chair and four new members.

Assuming the role of chair is Todd Pentlichuk, who is employed at McMaster University's Faculty of Health Sciences as the assistant director of operations. He has served on the HWMH and EG boards for the past eight years, including as vice-chair and as the leader of several board committees. Todd has a Master's degree in Public Administration and holds a Chartered Director (CDir.) designation.

The new board members are Marnie Lynn, Arash Farzam-Kia, Ram Shankar and Karen Tilstra.

Marnie is the chief human resources officer at The Children's Aid Society of Toronto, and previously held senior human resources positions at Burlington's Joseph Brant Hospital. She has a Master of Science degree in Health Sciences Administration and an executive certificate in Conflict Management. She also has a family cottage near Dunnville.

Arash works as a lawyer in Toronto, and

previously held senior employee relations positions at a hospital in Kingston and for the Government of Nunavut. In addition to a law degree, he has a Master's degree in Industrial Relations and a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy.

Ram is employed as chief information officer and chief privacy officer for Compass Community Health in Hamilton. He is a member of the Hamilton Health Team's Digital Strategy Committee and is planning a move to a new home in Dunnville. His academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Computer Science degree and a Master's degree in Project Management.

A former board member by virtue of her position as chair of the Dunnville Hospital and Healthcare Foundation, Karen has been appointed to continue on the HWMH and EG board as a non ex-officio member. A life-long resident of Dunnville, she served on the foundation board for nine years, is a former business owner, and active in her community church and school. She works as a mass market sales manager for Rosa Flora.



Todd Pentlichuk
Board Chair



Marnie Lynn



Arash Farzam-Kia



Ram Shankar



Karen Tilstra



**DUNNVILLE
HOSPITAL &
HEALTHCARE
FOUNDATION
NEWS**

Members of the community volunteered to decorate Smile Cookies sold in mid-September to support the foundation.

Another \$250,000 from DHHF to HWMH

Dunnville Hospital and Healthcare Foundation (DHHF) recently presented the hospital with a cheque for \$250,000 as part of its goal of contributing \$1.1 million for much-needed medical equipment. This latest donation brings to \$850,000 the total amount given to the hospital so far. The funding has come from events, direct mail campaigns and corporate giving solicitations.

One such corporate gift came from CIBC, which donated \$20,000 towards upgrades to the hospital's mammography workstation and ultrasound equipment.

Three major fund-raising initiatives occurred this past September, including the Dunnville Tim Hortons' annual Smile Cookie campaign, the Henriette McMichen Memorial Stride & Ride event and a new Healthcare Hero campaign. This latter campaign is encouraging members of the community to make donations to the Foundation in recognition of employees who have provided them and their families with exceptional care.

More than 150 golfers, 20 volunteers and a variety of sponsors came together for the foundation's annual golf tournament in August, which raised \$40,000. Canadian Tire was the event's presenting sponsor, with appearances by local MPP Toby Barrett and Haldimand mayor Ken Hewitt.

DHHF's final fund-raising initiative of the year will be the Trees of Hope campaign, which launches November 1, 2021, with a goal of \$200,000.

Welcome New Staff

HOSPITAL:

- Regan Mitchell – RPN
- Janet Arghittu – RPN
- Michelle Vucetic – Ward Clerk
- Susan Knox – Housekeeper
- Shawn Kennedy – RN
- Le-Anne Ryan – RN
- Katrina Vermeer – Ward Clerk
- Patricia Savokaitis – PSW
- Muhammad Ali Amjad – Pandemic Response Worker
- John Coutts – Vice President & Chief Financial Officer
- Samantha Eckert – PSW
- Elissa Telford – RN
- Brandy Selvaggio – Laboratory Patient Technician
- Sheena Sembrano – Medical Laboratory Technologist

EDGEWATER:

- Colleena Ng – PSW
- Nadine Stavinga – PSW
- Jennifer Sutton – Pandemic Response Worker
- Kassandra Munn – PSW
- Amanda McPherson – PSW
- Cori Sattler – Temp. Recreation Therapy Aide
- Jayne Hanemaayer – Pandemic Response Worker
- Emily Minor – PSW
- Elinah Mutenyo – RPN
- Tammy Nestmann – PSW
- Bonani Noko – PSW
- Riley O'Neill – Housekeeper
- Sherry Culp – RN

LONG-SERVICE AWARD OMISSION

Diagnostic Imaging Clerk Judy Wenjina's name was inadvertently left off the list of Long-Service Award recipients posted in the summer edition of HeartBeats. Congratulations Judy, on your 25 years of service to the hospital!



John Coutts

A New Vice-President and CFO

There is a new vice-president and chief financial officer at HWMH and Edgewater Gardens. John Coutts has been appointed to the position.

John is a certified professional accountant with an Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree. His past employment experience includes work as the manager of Revenue and Accounts Receivable at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, and most recently as a business systems consultant for a group of hospitals in the central east part of Ontario.



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