

# Community Connection



## Pembroke Regional Hospital Summer 2022 Edition



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### COVID Safety Measures Will Remain As Hospital Navigates Pandemic Impact



A little more than two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are heading into a summer that seems a bit more familiar.

Many of us are mask-less in our day-to-day social activities and outings, physical distancing and one-way aisles in our stores have mostly been eliminated and while there is still community transmission of the virus – we are also now seeing the resurgence of other illnesses and viruses in varying levels of acuity.

**Pierre Noel** So life as we knew it is slowly retaking its shape.

#### COVID-19 Safety Measures

As noted in earlier communication though, the removal of COVID safety measures in public settings is not reflected to the same extent in high risk settings like hospitals. We rely on these measures to not only keep our community's most vulnerable patients safe, but also to help to ensure that our staff and physicians stay healthy and are ready and able to provide the care and services our community needs.

As a result, hospitals, like ours, need to continue to maintain more stringent infection control measures. So, in the short time ahead, while we will see some easing of our policies around visitor screening and visitation, more fundamental safety measures like the wearing of masks in clinical settings will continue for some time.

#### Staffing Impacts

We are pleased to share that the COVID-related staffing shortages that we had been experiencing for the past few months are now in decline.

However, we are still challenged by fluctuating levels of daily absenteeism due to a variety of factors including the wide variety of illnesses now present in the community, the fact that the isolation period for symptomatic health care workers remains higher than that for the general population, and a high vacancy rate for unfilled positions.

For this reason, we continue to explore other ways of ensuring that we are appropriately staffed which has included more team-based care, welcoming some agency nurses on a temporary basis, and trialing new types of health care workers as part of our teams.

#### ED Wait Times

We, like many other hospitals, are also experiencing some higher than usual wait times in our Emergency Department which are the result of higher patient volumes and the fact that many needing to be seen have greater and more complex care needs.

We recognize how frustrating this is for our patients and their families. However, please know that our staff and physicians are working as quickly and safely as possible to ensure that appropriate and timely care is received by all.

At the same time, we continue to identify opportunities to improve patient flow.

#### PRH Launches Instagram Account



For all your hospital news and updates we are happy to announce that we have added Instagram to our list of social media sites... just search for Pembroke Regional Hospital.

As is clear from this edition of our newsletter, there is lots happening at PRH and we invite you to follow us through any of our tradition media tools or on any of our social media channels for all the latest news.

Take care and have a safe, happy and healthy summer!

Pierre Noel

### Major Improvements To The Hospital's Inpatient Surgical Space Are Underway

After nearly a decade of planning, exciting changes are coming to the Pembroke Regional Hospital's inpatient surgical space with construction scheduled to get underway this summer as part of a two-year \$18 million Surgical Redevelopment Project.

"In late April, our hospital was given the green light by the government of Ontario to award the construction contract for this significant improvement project which will modernize, improve and expand our hospital's surgical facilities," said PRH President and CEO Pierre Noel.

"One of the many great outcomes of this project will be the co-location of all surgical services and surgical patient space on the third floor of Tower A and D which are linked by an enclosed walkway," said Mr. Noel, adding that the new layout will allow for better patient flow and it will also reduce noise and traffic in the inpatient surgical space.

As an all-in-one surgical program, patients and families will go directly to the third floor where they will be greeted by our registration clerk and directed to register for their procedure, pick someone up after day surgery or go visit a loved one in a patient room.

"With so much effort and dedication put into the planning stages of this project over the past 10

years, we are very excited to finally see it progress and we look forward to sharing updates as the phased work moves ahead," he said.

Approximately 90% of the project's \$18 million cost will be funded by the province while the remaining 10% and equipment costs will be covered by the close to \$3 million that was raised through the PRH Foundation's Cutting Edge Campaign.



"Nearly 60 years after its original construction, our surgical floor will be brought up to modern standards and provide a more comfortable environment with enhanced privacy and accessibility for the thousands of surgical patients we care for each year," said Beth Brownlee, Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services and Chief Nursing Executive. "The space will not only meet the needs of today, but its design will also accommodate expanded surgical services in the years ahead."

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### How Our Patients Are Prioritized In The ED

**Who goes first in Emergency?**

Emergency Departments triage (sort) patients based on need for care. While all patients are important and will be seen, some require care more quickly than others. Please let us know if your symptoms change.

<b>Most Urgent</b>	Serious car crash Heart stopped beating Suspected stroke	
<b>Very Urgent</b>	Suspected heart attack Severe trouble breathing Large broken bones	
<b>Urgent</b>	Fainting Allergic Reaction Head Injury	Asthma attack Stomach pain Temperature over 40C Seizure
<b>Less Urgent</b>	Needs stitches Broken ankle or arm Sore ear, eye or throat	
<b>Not Urgent</b>	Removal of stitches Renewing a prescription Cough or congestion	

Upon arrival at our Emergency Department (ED), patients are evaluated by a nurse who assigns them a level based on the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale. Patients are then seen by a doctor in order of their priority on this scale and not on a first-come, first-serve basis. Patients are advised to notify the Triage Nurse if their condition changes and/or worsens.

There are also a number of circumstances that can affect how long you spend in the ED including the arrival of high-urgency patients, the number of tests you or other patients require, and the availability of treatment space.



## Launch Of Virtual Psychiatric Care Ensures Patient Needs Are Consistently Met

Patients requiring psychiatric assessment and follow up at the Pembroke Regional Hospital now have access to virtual care appointments when the circumstances don't allow for in-person sessions.

Prior to the pandemic, all interactions with the hospital's psychiatrists took place in-person on the Acute Mental Health unit or in community-based clinics.

The last two years, however, have been challenging in terms of service delivery and it was evident that in order to sustain timely access to psychiatric care, the hospital had to look at alternative delivery models.

"Going virtual has enabled quick access to psychiatry in certain circumstances. It has also given psychiatrists the ability to meet with patients who are unable to have in-person sessions due to illness," said Mireille Delorme, Director for Mental Health Services of Renfrew County, a program

operated by the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Having a virtual platform on the unit connects patients to services and treatment in their community, and being a regional program, this is important, she said. The virtual platform also allows patients to stay connected with family and friends unable to visit due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures.

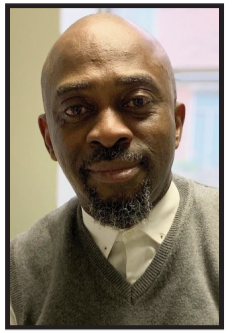
Prior to setting up the service, Ms. Delorme said her team consulted with other hospitals to see how virtual care was successfully integrated. The team then worked closely with the hospital's Information Technology department to ensure they had the right equipment and that all virtual interactions would be safe, secure and private.

Since its implementation, Sabine Mersmann, Senior Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services – Partnerships and Integration said patient response has been positive with many

finding the virtual interaction to be user-friendly and "just as good" as in-person, while staff see the benefits particularly in times when they require quick access to a physician or when an in-person appointment won't be possible.

"Virtual psychiatry has been well received by our patients and has been effective with the support of members of the mental health services team," said Psychiatrist Dr. Valentine Okechukwu.

"An added advantage is the flexibility it offers the psychiatrist to work when physical presence is not possible. Therefore it may be possible to engage more specialists who may choose to work remotely," he said.



**Dr. Valentine Okechukwu**

### Surgical Upgrades...Continued From Front

Highlights of the project include:

- Relocation of the Endoscopy Suite into new space
- Relocation of the Multi-Function (minor procedure) Room to the Surgical floor
- Creation of a new Ophthalmology Suite
- Creation of a new Surgical Day Care Unit with 12 recovery stations
- Creation of four new private rooms with private bathrooms
- Installation of central air conditioning and infrastructure upgrades
- Renovations to modernize existing surgical inpatient rooms with improved accessibility
- New registration and patient and family areas
- New scope reprocessing area
- New MDR (Medical Device Reprocessing) area
- New sterile medical equipment storage area

In order for the work to begin, some early steps are already taking place to free up space on the third floor of Tower

A. This includes the relocation of the hospital's chapel to the first floor of Tower A.

"Moving our chapel will not only provide the space required for our new endoscopy suite, scope cleaning room and minor procedure room but will also allow us to create a modern chapel that will be welcoming and bright and in a more accessible centralized location," Ms. Brownlee said.

Mr. Noel said that a renovation project of this size requires an incredible amount of effort and planning in order to ensure everything is done right and to minimize the disruption to patients and services while continuing to provide high quality surgical services in the interim.

"Not only will these enhancements make for a better patient experience and work environment for our health care team, but they will also make our facility more attractive to medical professionals looking to relocate to our area," Mr. Noel said.

### Foot Care Clinic Meets Identified Need

The Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACTT), a program administered by Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC), is helping ensure that those who live with serious mental illness are receiving proper foot care in order to reduce pain, improve mobility and enable them to be more active in the community.

This year alone, the ACTT Foot Care Clinic will accommodate 66 clients, an increase from the 30 who received clinic services in each of the past two years.

The prevention-based clinic is serviced by Registered Practical Nurse Brenda Kincade who has specialized training in foot care, and is open to clients on a first-come, first-serve basis, with a focus on those with diabetes. Ms. Kincade arranges followup for those who need it.

To date, the clinic has been housed at the MHSRC outreach site in downtown Pembroke, with free transportation offered to eligible clients from areas within Renfrew County. This summer, clinics will also be held in Renfrew and Arnprior in order to accommodate those who don't have transportation options.

ACTT Recreational Therapist Janet Gleason Morris said client feedback for the regional program has been very positive, noting that four clinics have been held to date this year and others will be scheduled as the need arises, so long as program funding is available.



### New Mammography Equipment Improves Patient Care and Patient Experience At PRH

A significant investment in new state-of-the-art mammography equipment used for breast imaging at the Pembroke Regional Hospital is already paying off in terms of improved comfort for patients, image quality, efficiency and ease of use by members of the Diagnostic Imaging team.

"The new General Electric Senographe Pristina mammography unit represents a capital investment of approximately \$600,000 and replaces equipment that was scheduled for an upgrade," said Sabine Mersmann, PRH Senior Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services / Partnerships and Integration.

"As with any advanced technology, the new unit has features that were not previously available which will allow us to provide an enhanced screening and diagnostic mammography service for those in our community," Ms. Mersmann said, adding that, in 2021-2022 alone, the PRH Diagnostic Imaging department performed 3,740 mammograms.

Diagnostic Imaging Director Laurie Menard said the hospital relied on the expertise of the staff and radiologists as part of the equipment evaluation, selection and purchase processes and they worked with the hospital's information technology and maintenance teams, as well as external partners, to ensure that the three-week downtime for removal and installation of equipment had minimal impact on patient care.

Despite the downtime, Ms. Menard said,

mammography wait times remained on target, in large part due to the excellent collaboration.

Radiologist Dr. Raluca Antonescu who was directly involved in the equipment selection process said the goal when reviewing different equipment options wasn't only to find a replacement for the aging equipment but to ensure that new features for patient comfort and radiation dose reduction were considered. Ergonomic features for technologists were equally taken under consideration.



**From left, technologists Melissa McGraw, Melissa Hellmig, Stephanie Kutschke, DI Director Laurie Menard, and Radiologists Dr. Fred Matzinger and Dr. Raluca Antonescu**

Dr. Fred Matzinger, Radiologist and Chief of Diagnostic Imaging, explained that one of the advantages of the new mammography unit is that it has the capability to perform advanced breast

imaging that has the potential to detect more cancers in women who have dense breast tissue. It may also decrease the callback rate for additional imaging when a woman has her first baseline mammogram," Dr. Matzinger said.

Dr. Antonescu echoed her colleague's sentiments about these benefits and added that the unit can also be used with a specialized biopsy system with more options for positioning that will result in additional comfort for patients required mammography guided procedures.

Since the installation of the new equipment in early April, technologists Stephanie Kutschke and Melissa McGraw said patient feedback has been positive with individuals commenting on the improved comfort, improved speed, and overall positive experience in their exams.

"We love the new equipment," Ms. Kutschke said. "It is so user-friendly and much quicker which helps with patient comfort. The unit is much more ergonomic for the technologists and we are excited to train on the new technology."

Ms. McGraw added that staff who have to work with the equipment every day "felt lucky to be involved in the process". She said it was helpful to be able to evaluate the options and choose the best one for the group.

"We were also able to redesign the layout of our room as a group and feel that it is more accessible for patients with disabilities, injuries and limited mobility."



## Department-Based Improvements Help To Enhance Care And The Patient Experience

### Acute Mental Health

- An updated *Patient and Family Information Handbook* now reflects COVID guidelines while welcoming patients to the unit and sharing what they can expect during their hospital stay.

- Discharge forms have been aligned with best practices to assist patients and their families in their understanding of their health conditions, access to resources and self-management skills.

- A Health Care Aide is being trialed as part of the interdisciplinary team who supports patients with personal care and recovery.

### Environmental Services

- A new cleaning routine was created to improve patient flow in the Operating Room on weekends.

### French Language Service

- PRH is exploring ways to expand French language services. This includes a review of public signage and finding other ways to provide services in French where and when possible.

### Health Records

- To speed up digital provider access to patient information, all outpatient and Day Surgery reports are now scanned within 24 hours of the encounter.

- For those providers who cannot receive documents electronically, auto faxing of text and Emergency Department records within 24 hours of the visit has been implemented.

- A new onboarding and maintenance program for the hospital's health care provider database is being used that updates and aligns ours with a provincial one on a bi-weekly basis. The database contains 37,511 providers. This ensures that patient information is sent to the correct provider in a timely fashion.

### Medical

- This month we welcome a Unit Support Worker (USW) to a sub-unit of our Medical program that cares for complex, frail, elderly patients who have finished their acute stay but

may have ongoing needs to transition from hospital to home. The USW will assist patients with feeding, recreation, walking patients, and social interaction. The addition of the USW will improve nursing flow and patient experiences.

### Mental Health Services of Renfrew County

- In partnership with the Upper Ottawa Valley and Renfrew OPP detachments, our program received grant funding to increase the number of crisis staff who are co-located at each location. The additional staff will help provide coverage of evening and weekend hours in order to capture a larger number of individuals needing the support.

As part of the response to a call for service where someone is in distress emotionally, the presence of a mental health professional is key to helping de-escalate the situation, providing resources and ensuring community follow up. In many cases, this also helps to divert a trip to the emergency room and has the potential to reduce the need for police involvement in the future when a community connection has been made.

### Obstetrics

- A new guided 3D virtual tour of the unit will soon be available on the PRH website for families to watch in advance of their birth experience.

### Pharmacy

- During the past year, the Pharmacy department has been undergoing renovations to improve some of the areas where Cancer Care medications are prepared. Renovations are scheduled to finish in these areas by mid-summer. Completion of this work will put the department in a good position for future growth and will have a significant, positive impact on the specially trained and certified pharmacy technicians who will work in state-of-the-art sterile compounding rooms.

### Rehabilitation

- In February, the unit welcomed Health Care Aides as part of a six month pilot project. The new team members assist patients with their activities of daily living to achieve their goals of care.

- This summer, the unit will open up use of its

renovated outdoor deck. This area which has new furnishings and sunshade, provides a great space for patients to get outside and enjoy some fresh air. The deck is also used for therapeutic purposes such as recreation therapy and mobility on uneven ground. The Rehab deck is currently open to patients and staff with some COVID guidelines which are posted at the door.



### Spiritual Care/ Social Work

- PRH now offers a "Bereavement Resource Package" in both French and English. This package is designed to answer common questions family members have after experiencing the death of a loved one. There are several components to the resource – a list of local supports and resources such as funeral homes and grief counselling, a list of agencies with their contact information that family may need to contact after a death such as Veterans' Affairs, Revenue Canada, provincial agencies etc. and lastly a pamphlet on coping with grief.

Packages are available at most nursing station desks, or through Social Work or Spiritual Care. They are available for patients, families and staff to use as needed.

### Surgical

- Our Surgical and Rehabilitation teams worked together to improve and update patient discharge forms in order to assist patients and their families in their understanding and management of post-operative care requirements after discharge.

- Nursing, Anaesthesia and Education teams have collaboratively revised protocols for patients who receive an epidural for pain management after surgery. As a result, those patients now recover on the Surgical unit instead of in the ICU.

## Investment In New Nuclear Medicine Equipment Advances PRH Imaging Capabilities

A significant investment in the field of Nuclear Medicine will allow the Pembroke Regional Hospital to advance its imaging services and increase diagnostic capabilities.

Recently, the hospital invested approximately one million dollars in a state-of-the-art Nuclear Medicine machine to replace the one that has served the Nuclear Medicine department for the past 15 years.

Nuclear medicine is a branch of medical imaging that uses a radioactive product called a tracer to check how well organs and tissues function within the body. Most often, this type of diagnostic test is used to show the presence and/or the extent of a disease or condition.

Nuclear Medicine specialist Dr. Christopher O'Brien explained that the newly purchased system can better evaluate and characterize cancer or heart disease through improved imaging techniques.

With additional features, he said the new technology further enhances the hospital's cardiac assessment program. "With this addition, we will be able to further build on our risk assessment capabilities, giving patients a more complete understanding of their cardiac status in order to make more informed decisions about their health," Dr. O'Brien said.

Dr. O'Brien said the new equipment will also be able to further help patients who have orthopaedic issues by combining the very sensitive Nuclear Medicine functional imaging with a highly accurate CT for a single stop assessment. This will benefit patients who have knee and hip replacements as well as those with other bone and joint disorders.

The new Nuclear Medicine machine will also:

- Have a significant impact on the management of cancer patients as it can more accurately assess and localize the spread of cancer resulting in the best treatment at an earlier stage of disease.

- More accurately assess patients for blood clots in the lung through a specialized scan which is a very accurate and safe procedure to determine the presence of pulmonary embolism. This technique has also been shown to be very helpful in evaluating blood clots in those patients who have COVID.



**Nuclear Medicine Technologist and Radiation Safety Officer Katie Fadock**

Diagnostic Imaging Director Laurie Menard said the new machine went into service at the end of March following a seven-week pause for the removal and installation of equipment. Since then, the department has ramped back up to full service.

Ms. Menard said the hospital relied on the expertise staff, radiologists and our Nuclear Medicine specialist as part of the equipment evaluation, selection and purchase processes and

they worked with the hospital's information technology and maintenance teams, as well as external partners, to ensure that the downtime had minimal impact on patient care.

Katie Fadock, the hospital's Nuclear Medicine Technologist and Radiation Safety Officer who played a key role in the selection process noted that, in addition to some of the enhanced service features, the new system and software also allows for additional radiation dose reduction without image quality compromise, generally quicker scan times and streamlined imaging processing.

The system is also more ergonomic for the technologist and allows for efficient transition between patients. She noted that some training on the new equipment is ongoing, with plans to receive specialized training on the new cardiac features from the vendor in June.

"It's been a long 12-month process from RFP (Request For Proposal) to install - but so worth it! This community is so fortunate to have this level of diagnostics in their backyard," Ms. Fadock said.

PRH President and CEO Pierre Noel praised the team and acknowledged the work that it took in order to complete this much-needed purchase.

"Nuclear Medicine, like many diagnostic modalities, continues to advance in terms of the technology used, so despite the fact we were due for an upgrade, it was worth it to take the time, evaluate our options and invest in the best technology available," Mr. Noel said, adding that, in 2021-2022 alone, the PRH Diagnostic Imaging department performed 938 nuclear medicine scans.





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# Gala

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October 15, 2022

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Join today for as little as \$5/month and help improve health care for tomorrow right here at home!

"I am a proud member of the Monthly Giving Club for many reasons. The Pembroke Regional Hospital has done so much for my family, and donations really benefit everyone's healthcare with new and advanced medical equipment - healthcare we all are able to receive quicker and closer to home. Not only has PRH helped bring my 3 children into the world, they have literally been a saving grace for both my husband and daughter! I am proud of our local hospital, and to help support keeping care close to home."

Jessica Simmons



## HELP KEEP CANCER CARE CLOSE TO HOME

Our cancer treatment areas are in need of overall improvements and modernization; from our Pharmacy where the much-needed medications are prepared, to the Chemotherapy treatment areas where we care for our patients, to the waiting rooms where patients, their families and their support people sit quietly with their thoughts.

These spaces are vital in the treatment and care of each and every cancer patient, and through this campaign, our goal is to ensure they are comfortable, easily accessible and state-of-the-art.

We need your help so that every single cancer patient has the most up-to-date equipment available to them at the Pembroke Regional Hospital, and our cancer patients and their families have one less worry.



- **Help support local cancer patients.**
- **Help to expand the Chemotherapy treatment areas to care for even more local cancer patients.**
- **Help make a difference with a one-time donation or every month by joining our Monthly Giving Club.**

"The care and treatment I received from our PRH team was second to none!"

In 2011, as Chair of the Pembroke Regional Hospital Board of Directors, I had the privilege of cutting the ribbon for our new satellite chemotherapy unit. Little did I know that six years later I would be accessing this service for myself. In February 2017, I was diagnosed with bilateral breast cancer. My treatment plan included three surgeries, 18 chemotherapy treatments and 25 radiation treatments. Thanks to the wonderful relationship between our medical staff and the staff of The Ottawa Hospital Cancer Team, I was able to have my surgeries and my chemotherapy all in Pembroke. It was wonderful being able to have my treatments right at home in familiar surroundings provided by friends and familiar faces.

—Barb Schoof, Cancer Survivor and PRH Board of Directors Chair (2005-2012)

### YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT THE *Cancer Care Campaign*



Please complete this donation form and return it with an enclosed payment, if applicable, to **Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation at 705 Mackay St, Pembroke, ON, K8A 1G8**  
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