

MEDIA RELEASE

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GREY BRUCE HOSPITALS RESPOND TO CAPACITY CHALLENGES AMID THIRD WAVE OF COVID-19

April 21, 2021 – In response to escalating bed capacity challenges across the province and a Ministry of Health directive issued on April 20th requiring all non-emergent and non-urgent elective surgeries and procedures to be ceased, the three hospital corporations in Grey Bruce are increasing bed capacity and ramping down elective surgeries and procedures beginning this week. The postponement of elective surgeries is necessary to ensure hospital staff are available to provide care for the additional beds that have been opened.

All impacted patients will be contacted directly by their physician's offices. We are encouraging the public not to call the hospitals or their physician's office.

All urgent and emergent surgeries will continue, and physicians will evaluate patient status and provide care as needed.

The number of COVID+ patients in Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds is increasing dramatically, particularly in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and hospitals outside the GTA have been asked to take patients from other hospitals that have become overwhelmed. All hospitals across Southwestern and Eastern Ontario have been asked to support these efforts.

Over the weekend, Ontario Health West advised hospitals that patient transfers out of the GTA will begin on a daily basis to free up ICU capacity, with up to ten patients per day to the South West Region. As bed capacity across the Grey Bruce region is already nearing or at 100%, additional beds are required to support these repatriations.

Hospitals are also facing bed capacity challenges because there are a large number of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients in hospital – patients designated as ALC are those people who have completed their hospital stay but are unable to be discharged to their next destination (long-term care, home, supportive housing, etc.) because that destination is not available.

South Bruce Grey Health Centre (SBGHC)

Beginning April 21st, five additional surge beds will be opened at the Walkerton hospital, and three surge beds that were previously opened at the Kincardine hospital to manage additional capacity will remain open. Health care human resources are stretched thin at this time, and as a result, support for these additional beds will include allied health professionals working alongside nurses in a team nursing model.

To free up staffing resources to support the team nursing model, Diagnostic Imaging procedures will be slowed to 50-75% beginning April 21st, and surgical services have been ramped down to focus on priority 1 and 2 procedures through May 10th. If your previously booked Diagnostic Imaging exam or surgery is impacted, you will be contacted to reschedule.

MEDIA RELEASE

“Every hospital bed is a provincial resource,” explains Michael Barrett, SBGHC President & CEO. “We fully support a seamless provincial hospital system that will accept patients from other hospitals, share resources and prioritize services so all hospitals can continue to provide safe, effective care to both COVID-19 and non COVID-19 patients.”

Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS)

GBHS is postponing all pre-booked elective and non-urgent surgeries starting this Monday, April 26th. Diagnostic imaging services are not impacted at this time.

GBHS is currently caring for seven COVID positive patients, and the Intensive Care Unit is full. GBHS is increasing beds in that unit from six to eight, and has opened 20 additional beds to support acute care patients. Up to twenty more beds will be opened across the six GBHS hospitals for those who are awaiting transfer to an alternate level of care.

“We recognize that postponing elective surgeries is a hardship for many families,” said Gary Sims, GBHS President and CEO. “The Ministry issued this Directive because we are in a critical situation, and difficult choices have to be made to save lives. We will do everything we can to get those surgeries re-booked when we have the capacity and human resources to do so safely.”

Hanover & District Hospital (HDH)

As of April 12th, HDH has reduced its surgical services to only urgent and emergent surgeries and patients impacted by this ramp down have been contacted. At this time, Diagnostic Imaging services have not reduced and will be evaluated as the provincial situation evolves.

To support both local, regional and provincial needs and resources, HDH has 12 additional beds ready to be opened and staffed. The model of care is moving towards a team nursing model with the support of allied health and other health care professions to care for the expected increased number of patients. HDH has and will continue to provide care and support to COVID-19 positive patients as they present to both the Emergency and Acute Care Unit.

“The province as a whole is in need,” says Dana Howes, President & CEO of HDH. “All of our beds need to be viewed as system-wide resources to ensure that patients across our province receive safe, quality and appropriate care for both COVID positive and non-positive patients. We cannot do this without the care and engagement of our communities and to date the groundswell of support has been phenomenal. Thank you to every member of the Grey Bruce community for your care and compassion during this time.”

Visiting restrictions have also been further reduced in all Grey Bruce hospitals to ensure the safety of our patients and staff. Patients, caregivers and family members are encouraged to visit the hospital websites for more information and details.

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All three Grey Bruce hospitals would like to thank our communities in advance for their understanding, patience and support. This is not business as usual, and our teams are working tirelessly to support patients during this time.

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