COVID-19 Update #18

This morning, Ontario Public Health reported 671 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ontario. Ottawa Public Health reported they are investigating 43 confirmed or indeterminate cases. There are 8 COVID-19 positive patients at TOH, 5 in acute care and 3 in intensive care. I am saddened to report that yesterday, our first COVID-19 positive patient, a 97 year old man passed away in our hospital. I know all of you join me in extending our condolences to his family and loved ones. I also want to thank our staff who provided him excellent care.

Clinical care continuity plans and capacity building
We continue to reduce non-emergent activity in the hospital, increase transfers of alternate level of care patients to community and long-term care, and utilize space outside of the hospital for patient care, screening and testing.

The Brewer arena assessment center has now been operational for 12 days. We have screened approximately 4,500 patients, 3,400 of whom were tested. Test results for 1,114 patients have been completed and 19 patients tested COVID-19 positive. We are aware of the long wait times for test results and continue to work with public health to address the backlog. Earlier this week, additional laboratory capacity came on-line with Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association (EORLA) ramping up its COVID-19 testing.

To care for the homeless population, we have partnered with Ottawa Inner City Health to provide screening and isolation capacity.

We have also partnered with Ottawa Paramedic Services to create a community outreach program where paramedics will provide care and testing to people in their homes and long-term care facilities, supported by physicians through virtual care.

Update on staff screening at entrances to the hospital
We continue to monitor the need for enhanced screening for staff, patients and visitors entering the hospital. Staff will be asked to complete a brief on-line screening assessment prior to
entering the hospital. More information on how to access the on-line screening tool and which entrances will be affected, will be provided to you before implementation.

Please do not come to work if you feel unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19, even mild, as listed by public health. If you develop symptoms at work, stop working, mask immediately, perform hand hygiene, self-isolate and notify occupational health and wellness.

**Surgical mask use and conservation**

Yesterday, I reported that we were working with government and our peer hospitals to review whether our current surgical mask usage policy was appropriate based on the most up-to-date information available. Our review was guided by the principle that any changes must consider the impact on staff safety, and judicious use of masks to reduce the possibility of an undersupply later, when risk becomes more widespread and higher.

Today, our leadership team made a decision to revise our policy on surgical mask usage in the hospital. Our decision is supported by many of our peer hospitals across the province where community spread is felt to be likely. The policy decision provides two surgical masks per shift for all staff who interact with patients. This change is intended to reduce the risk to all healthcare workers posed by the general population. We will be rolling this out in a phased approach over the next few days.

Please note that these policy changes do not impact the current directive from the Chief Medical Officer of Health that states that droplet and contact precautions are to be used for routine care, and airborne precautions where aerosol generating medical procedures are planned or anticipated to be performed on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

As this outbreak evolves, risks will change and we will have to adapt. Working together will enable us to be as safe as possible, and allow us to care for the sickest and most vulnerable patients in our community. Remember that the best measures to protect yourself, your colleagues and patients are to perform proper hand hygiene at all times, maintain physical distancing even in the hospital and use appropriate personal protective equipment as required.