COVID-19 Update #25

This morning, Ontario Public Health reported 2,793 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ontario, with Ottawa Public Health confirming 252 of those in Ottawa. There are 656 patients admitted to TOH, 12 of whom are COVID-19 positive, 4 in intensive care and 8 in acute care.

Conservation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Earlier this week, I informed you that a new directive on precautions for healthcare workers interacting with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients was released by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. Yesterday, I described the supply chain structure and management that TOH follows for acquiring supplies, including PPE.

Today, I want to emphasize that an important part of managing PPE supplies is conservation through appropriate and judicious use. This will enable us to better protect health care workers against surges in COVID-19 cases. While we continue to work closely with our local vendors and the provincial and federal governments to acquire more supplies, we must have contingency plans for COVID-19 surges.

One of these contingencies is to explore the evidence for various methods of retaining, sterilizing, reprocessing and re-using PPE, including N95 respirators. We are working with many of our partners throughout the health system to determine the best and safest approach, should this be needed in the future. To support this work, we have begun collecting used N95 respirators on the units for possible reprocessing. Staff safety remains our overriding priority as we review best practices in considering the use of reprocessed N95 respirators.

I will keep you updated on the status of our supplies and our contingency planning.

COVID-19 Laboratory Testing
Last week, the Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association (EORLA) began testing for COVID-19. As a result, wait times for results have been reduced from several days to an average of three days so far. We want to recognize and thank the EORLA team for their work in helping reduce the turnaround time for test results in our region.

**Brewer Arena Assessment Center**

It is hard to believe the Brewer Assessment Centre is finishing its third week of operations already. We opened on March 13 and as of yesterday the Centre has assessed 5,636 adults and tested 4,928 of them. I have been so impressed with both how quickly the centre was stood up and the positive feedback I have received from patients and staff. I would also like to acknowledge the partnership with CHEO in providing a centre that has relieved pressure from our respective emergency departments and provided a compassionate source of care for anxious patients during this pandemic. I am very proud of how our values and vision have been represented.

**Community Appreciation**

Since my message yesterday, many of you have shared more messages you have received from the community. We are gathering all of these. Here is one excerpt – “I don’t know what we would do without you all, everyone of you … Thank you more than any words could ever express.”

Thank you to all who have been sending messages, social media and photos to communications@toh.ca. Keep them coming!