Hospital staffer retires after relative gets vaccinated without appointment

Written By Sam Odrowski

Headwaters Health Care Centre is apologizing to the community, following an incident where a staff director had one of their elderly relatives vaccinated against COVID-19 at a recent clinic solely designated for health care workers.

The incident happened on Jan. 12 and the staff director in question retired on Jan. 19, after being on paid leave while an investigation was carried out.

Headwaters CEO and president, Kim Delahunt said that the vaccination of a non-health care worker was an isolated incident and procedures are in place to prevent it from happening again.

?This was an error in judgement by one staff director and is not part of our hospital's protocols. We have implemented additional processes to ensure that we follow provincial and public health guidelines,? she noted.

?We are engaging leaders, staff and physicians in supplementary education about our Ethical Decision-Making Framework to ensure similar situations never arise in any future vaccination clinics that we may have the opportunity to partner in.?

Since news first broke of the non-health care worker being vaccinated at a designated clinic, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), which represents more than 25,000 healthcare workers in the Province, released a statement saying Headwaters response is too accommodating for such a grave breach of protocol.

?She had to go,? said OPSEU President Warren Thomas. ?But the hospital leadership must take this more seriously. When someone in management commits such a serious breach in protocol and then walks away with a retirement deal, it won't send a strong enough message to other managers who may decide to exercise their retirement or severance option.?

?The same people who got passed in the vaccine queue are some of the same taxpayers who are paying for her severance package,? he added.

It's important to note, the staff director who's stepped down did pay into a provincial pension plan during their career at Headwaters.

A total of 47 staff and physicians at the local hospital have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

On Jan. 14, 220 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were provided to Headwaters Hospital staff and additional doses have been offered at different vaccination clinics.

Headwaters has a team of over 800 staff and 160 physicians.

The vaccine program is currently voluntary, so health care workers make the choice for themselves, if they should get vaccinated.

Delahunt reiterated her regret for the incident happening and said she's glad the issue was addressed.

?We apologize on behalf of the hospital. This was an isolated incident and not within our protocols. We have implemented additional processes to ensure we do things differently going forward,? she noted.

?This incident reinforces that in a healthy workplace culture it's good and appropriate for people to speak up, either in the moment or after the fact.

?We appreciate staff raising the concern so we could investigate it.?