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Headwaters staff members frustrated following alleged vaccination of casual worker

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Concerns over who's receiving the COVID-19 vaccine first among Headwaters Health Care Centre staff was raised for a second time last week, spurring an internal investigation.

The local hospital's president and CEO, Kim Delahunt, told the Citizen on Tuesday that there was no wrong doing in the alleged vaccination of a casual screener/runner hospital worker against COVID-19 at a Brampton Clinic.

CityNews reported late last week that it received several news tips from staff members at Headwaters, sharing their frustration that a casual employee of the hospital who hasn't worked there since August, returned from school in Ottawa to receive a shot.

?A concern regarding his vaccination status was raised and it was immediately investigated.? As he is a casual employee of the hospital, he is eligible to receive the vaccine.? The investigation was completed last week. We are confident in this circumstance, there was no wrong doing,? said Delahunt.

She noted that it is entirely up to staff whether they disclose their vaccination status against COVID-19 and because of this, they cannot confirm if the causal worker in question was vaccinated. However, he was eligible.

The casual worker's mother manages the Emergency Department and COVID-19 Assessment Centre at Headwaters.

The recent investigation into misconduct with the vaccination of Headwaters staff follows news that broke last week regarding a senior staff member vaccinating their relative who doesn't work at the hospital and had no appointment.

?We experienced an unfortunate situation recently with the January 14 vaccination clinic on site held by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. We discovered that a staff Director at our hospital had an elderly family member vaccinated the same day the clinic ran after a staff member raised it with their union steward. The elderly family member was not pre-scheduled. They were at the hospital for other tests at the time the clinic ran,? explained Delahunt.

?It was subsequently identified to our human resources department and an investigation was initiated. The investigation did involve Public Health and the facts and details cannot be shared publicly.?

The staff director involved in the breach of protocol went on paid leaving during the investigation. Five days later, on Jan. 19, the senior staff member retired.

?This was a failure in sound decision making by one individual, for which they and the hospital are deeply sorry,? said Delahunt.

The provincial government determines the priority groups for COVID-19 vaccinations and as their direction evolves, so do the practices at vaccine clinics.

At the beginning of the vaccine program rollout, priority was given to patient-facing healthcare workers at Headwaters before expanding to include all hospital staff.

Currently the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which was distributed to Headwaters staff, is being delayed for frontline workers. The interval for the next dose as increased from 21 to 35 days, impacting staff and physicians at Headwaters who were slated to receive their second dose two weeks sooner.

?We recognize that the vaccination process has been a challenge with information changing rapidly. We remain committed to supporting everyone who wishes to be vaccinated,? said Delahunt.