

More cases of COVID-19 confirmed at Headwaters hospital, six cases at Shelburne retirement homes



Written By MIKE BAKER

A total of 14 staff members and 10 inpatients have tested positive for COVID-19 at Headwaters Health Care Centre as of Wednesday morning (April 8).

The hospital started posting daily statistics on its website this week, highlighting that an additional 38 staff members were self-isolating, having potentially come into contact with an individual testing positive for coronavirus. Of the 10 confirmed inpatient cases, four of those individuals are currently receiving treatment at the local hospital.

"We are doing everything we can to keep our staff and patients safe during this exceptional time," Headwaters hospital spokesperson Jennifer Hamilton informed the Citizen on Tuesday (April 7).

Some of those additional measures include refusing access to the hospital to visitors, with the exception of maternity and palliative care units, which require special arrangements to be made, reducing access to the hospital to two points of entry, with screening measures in place for everyone who enters, and cancelling many clinics, programs and services to reduce the number of people in the hospital.

All volunteer activities at the site have been suspended, with any member of staff who can work remotely encouraged to do so. The hospital has doubled down on its cleaning routines, and has made changes to various parts of the hospital, particularly to waiting areas, to promote social distancing.

"Most importantly right now is ensuring our staff have the right personal protective equipment for the right situations," Ms. Hamilton said.

The community has been particularly helpful on that front. The Rotary Club of Orangeville has donated \$13,000 to the hospital to help pay for much-needed supplies, with several small businesses in the area stepping up to purchase items such as gloves and masks, and delivering them to the local facility.

The number of COVID-19 cases locally, as is the case almost everywhere else around the world, has increased substantially over the past week. As of Wednesday morning, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health has 113 confirmed cases, with 35 of those here in Dufferin County. Visits at our local COVID-19 Assessment Centre, situated at Headwaters hospital, are up again this week, with a total of 1,992 individuals processed and 774 tests administered as of press time.

Worldwide cases of coronavirus surpassed the 1.5 million mark on Wednesday afternoon. From that total, around 310,000 people have recovered from the virus, with 83,476 individuals dying. The United States is now recognized as the official epicentre of COVID-19, with 400,549 cases as of 11 a.m. on Wednesday. Spain, Italy, France and Germany round out the top five countries for total cases, with each recording more than 100,000 cases. Canada is now ranked 13th on that list, with 17,897 total cases as of end of day Tuesday.

Concerns have been escalating locally after two Shelburne retirement residences confirmed cases of COVID-19 this week. Dufferin Oaks was already on lockdown after two staff members tested positive for the virus last week. As of Wednesday, the County of Dufferin, who operates the facility, confirmed a third staff member had contracted coronavirus, with two residents also infected. It was also revealed on Tuesday that Shelburne Residence Retirement and Nursing Home had its first resident test positive for COVID-19.

Dufferin Oaks is continuing to follow all WDGPH directives. Infectious prevention continues to be the priority, a County release distributed on Monday reads. Isolation measures are in place and staff in the impacted units are using full personal protective equipment gowns, masks and gloves. Anyone that is experiencing symptoms is not able to work, and is to be tested at the an assessment centre.

In an open letter to the community, Dr. Peter Cino, Chief of Staff at Headwaters hospital, stated that everyone needed to work together to get through this crisis. He called on local residents to maintain a level of calmness as businesses and organizations implement measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our area.

Every aspect of our lives has changed. Just think about the last time you went to the grocery store. You could get angry and frustrated waiting six feet apart outside, but I would encourage you to look beyond, and realize this inconvenience is an attempt to protect you, your family and your community in the best way possible.

He added, Change is difficult. I understand why people are scared. Sir Winston Churchill said fear is a reaction, courage is a decision. We need to have the courage to stand together and fight this virus together.

Dr. Cino went on to commend the staff at Headwaters hospital, saying he would, literally, trust each and every one of the facility's physicians with his life during this troubling time.

I have worked as a physician in this community for over 25 years. I have watched countless times as these physicians have had the courage to change their practice, with the goal of providing the best possible care given the local circumstances. Rest assured, they have acted in the best interest of patients and this community, Dr. Cino said.

Your local healthcare community, within the hospital, including nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare, as well as the family of physician offices in the community, realized many weeks ago that our best chance, our only chance, was for the medical staff to stand together, and we have done this, he concluded. Thank you for the support you have shown us, as we lead you straight into this battle.