**Monday, March 23, 2020**

Assessment Centre Update: Yesterday (Sunday, March 22), 15 people were seen and all 15 were tested. These numbers are lower than what has been typical so far. The lower numbers are likely attributed to a technical issue Public Health was experiencing with their call system. The issue has since been resolved. We continue to work closely with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit to ensure consistency in referrals to the COVID-19 Assessment Centre at our Hospital. We are keeping up with the community need for testing, as determined by scientifically based medical directives.

We are collaborating with St. Joseph’s Care Group (SJCG) to increase capacity for our Hospital to adequately manage any potential influx of COVID-19 cases. SJCG is able to take and care for some patients from our Hospital due to reduction of their non-essential services. We are grateful for the continued support of our partners during this pandemic.

We are shifting away from the term “social distancing” and replacing it with “physical distancing”. “Physical distancing" is a better descriptor for the need to keep physical distance from people so that we can prevent the virus from transferring to one another.

We are operationalizing physical distancing on units within our Hospital, for the health and safety of our staff, professional staff, and patients. This work is complex in clinical settings, with many considerations for the protection of patients and health care providers.

Recommendations are being developed regarding possible travel restrictions beyond Northwestern Ontario to further help limit the spread of COVID-19. Information provided by Hospital leaders will inform recommendations. More information will be provided when it is available.

Enhanced visitor restrictions may be implemented as per the recommendations of Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. For the safety of patients, their families and staff, it has been recommended that only essential visitors should be permitted until further notice. Essential visitors are defined by the Ministry as those who have a patient who is dying or very ill, a parent/guardian of an ill child or youth, a visitor of a patient undergoing surgery, or a woman giving birth. Such decisions will need to balance compassion for our patients and the impact this will have on their overall experience, and the need to protect the health and safety of patients and staff.

A pathway for COVID-19-related patient care from arrival at the Emergency Department to all levels of care that may be required has been developed. The team is looking into and addressing any challenges that have been identified. This planning supports consistency, efficiency and effectiveness in the case of COVID-19 treatment.

In order to support health care and frontline workers during this COVID-19 outbreak, Ontario plans to exempt certain child care centres from the order to close all licensed child

care centres pursuant to the state of emergency declared last week. This exemption will ensure our frontline health care providers have access to safe and reliable child care so that they can continue to come to work and focus on the health and well-being of patients and families.

For questions about COVID-19 testing criteria, please contact the TBDHU’s Infectious Disease Program at 807-625-5900 or toll free at 1-888-294-6630.

Local COVID-19 case status: <https://www.tbdhu.com/coronavirus>

Provincial COVID-19 case status: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-0>

Canada COVID-19 case status: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

COVID-19 Daily Situation Report videos: <http://tbrhsc.net/covid-19-information>

All Hospital COVID-19 updates are available on the iNtranet at <https://comms.tbrhsc.net/covid-19-information/>