**Tuesday, March 24, 2020**

Improvements to the screening process continue to be made as the situation develops and in response to helpful feedback from staff. **Effective immediately, staff will no longer be able to use the Emergency Department entrance**, with the exception of life and limb situations. Staff are still able to use the Labour & Delivery entrance, and the MRI entrance with the online screening tool. This change is for your health and safety.

Assessment Centre Update: In the seven days that the COVID-19 Assessment Centre has been operational, we have seen a total of 200 patients, and tested 165. Thank you to our staff and professional staff, as well as our partners in public health for their collaborated efforts to ensure that those who require testing can access it safely at our Assessment Centre.

The COVID-19 Assessment Centre is reserving a daily time slot from 19:00 – 20:00 for testing of testing Hospital staff and professional staff. All are required to go through the regular screening process to determine eligibility for testing.

Human Resources is exploring the option of bringing back retired nurses/physicians to assist as required during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, due to the reduction of non-essential services, our Hospital has staff available for redeployment. Retired nurses and physicians will only be used if/when required. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

It is extremely important for everyone to follow the same Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) rules in times of crises. According to Dr. Zaki Ahmed, “Decisions made about PPE requirements are not made lightly nor are they arbitrary. They are grounded in science and epidemiology and change based on what information becomes available. We must be smart about how we manage our supply and take into account the likelihood of exposure based on population prevalence of the disease. It is crucial that we do not use our entire stock of N95 masks now and then have nothing left when there is a spike in COVID-19 patients at our Hospital.”

We know Ontario’s order regarding redeployment has prompted many questions. As we are already in extreme circumstances, some staff redeployment has already occurred. More details will be provided via memo.

Revisions to care partner restrictions will be implemented at our Hospital. We are preparing, and building on the province’s definition of essential visitors to protect patients, family members and health care providers and consider compassion in our acute care environment. More information will be shared once it is confirmed.

The Ontario government ordered the mandatory closure of all non-essential workplaces (as of Tuesday, March 24 at 11:59 p.m.). This closure will be in effect for 14 days with the possibility of extension as the situation evolves. The order enables ongoing service from the external providers that are essential to our Hospital’s operations.

The province also announced that it is providing $200 million in social services relief funding to help protect the health and safety of the province's most vulnerable people. The funding will help municipalities and social service providers continue to deliver their critical services, hire additional staff, and find ways to promote physical distancing and self-isolation to keep patients, clients, and their families safe and healthy.

The province has launched an enhanced and interactive online self-assessment tool to help the public determine if they may have contracted COVID-19. Users are taken through a series of questions, and based on their response, provided clear direction of the action they should take.

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/>