A message to our community – July 24, 2020

We hope this message finds you safe and well as we enter Stage 3 of re-opening in Simcoe Muskoka and across much of the province. In this update, we will share the work underway here at the hospital to plan for a future where we continue to deliver essential mental health care while keeping our patients, staff and community safe.

COVID patient cases remain at zero

Waypoint continues to have no positive patient cases with more than 300 patients now tested at the hospital. We have had only one staff positive case since the pandemic response began in March 2020. All safety precautions remain in place – universal masking of all staff on clinical programs and any who cannot physical distance by 6 ft, screening, hand hygiene, use of full PPE in our isolation unit and for any symptomatic patients, physical distancing etc.

Planning for services in a pandemic environment

Waypoint is working through recovery planning to ensure we are providing a treatment environment that is safe and offers high-quality care during an active pandemic.

This work requires changes to services, to care delivery processes and use of space to meet public health measures like physical distancing. We’re exploring how things can be done differently. This includes reviewing our facilities and space needs, as well as our services to ensure we have the best infrastructure to support our patient programs, both in hospital and in the community. Much work is underway to review our actions in response to COVID and what worked well or needs to be improved as we prepare for a second wave.

Our team is actively reviewing and evaluating the safety and infection control measures we put in place since March, monitoring and managing our supply of personal protective equipment, and exploring how we will respond in the event a second wave of the virus occurs.

Priorities include:

Resuming limited visits
We know that not having visitors has been difficult for both patients and their loved ones. We are happy to be able to resume limited visits the week of July 27, 2020. As we must continue with our infection control practices, these visits are limited to one visitor and are by appointment only. Clinical staff are working with our patients for who they would like to have visit so please contact the specific program for more information. Patients are still able to arrange virtual visits with the support of our clinical teams by telephone and other technology when available.
Continuing virtual care while reestablishing necessary in-person counselling safely
Transitioning to virtual care for many of our outpatients has allowed us to see the benefits of this type of care. While not always the best option, we will continue to offer virtual care when it makes sense while we work to reestablish necessary in-person care safely.

Expanding the provision of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)
Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is one of the most effective treatments in psychiatry for most major mental disorders, particularly for affective disorders, which include those suffering from severe episodes of major depression. This is a critical treatment for our patients as it has a 75-90 per cent effectiveness in alleviating symptoms.

Re-establishing services and supports that were closed due to COVID
You may be aware that we temporarily consolidated our provincial Forensic Assessment Program onto one unit to support staffing needs of our COVID response including the opening of an isolation unit on-site as well as a community assessment centre. The voluntary Georgianwood Program for Concurrent Disorders was suspended to ensure we had enough space to adhere to public health guidelines on physical distancing for inpatients. Our team is working on how we can plan to offer these services and supports in the future while taking into consideration the potential for a second wave of COVID cases.

Bringing back other services such as chiropody, dentistry and hair care
Our commitment to provide exceptional service and care includes holistic services such as chiropody, dentistry and hair care. Planning to reintroduce these services safely continues.

Working with our partners to maintain the local Assessment Centre
Waypoint continues to work with Georgian Bay General Hospital and other local partners on providing COVID testing to the community at the Midland Assessment Centre. Planning continues for how this service will continue as hospitals and partners begin to ramp up their services.

COVID-19 has presented a significant challenge to all of our health care organizations. Waypoint continues to meet weekly on emergency preparedness under a formal Emergency Operation Centre. Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) remains a priority at our Penetanguishene and Midland sites and for our staff and clients in the community.

We are immensely grateful to our staff working to deliver crucial mental health care, and to the many businesses, community groups, donors and staff who have donated to Waypoint during this time.

It becomes more and more apparent that we really are in this together.

With the pandemic and other recent world events it’s more important than ever to look after your own mental health needs – talk to your family physician, make an appointment at the virtual walk-in clinic, call your local crisis line, or visit the emergency room if you are in a crisis. You can also visit www.211Ontario.ca to find mental health and addiction supports.

Please continue to do your part to contain the spread of COVID-19. Wash your hands, practice physical distancing and stay home when possible. Please also practice compassion and kindness, we can all use a little more of this. We will get through this together.

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