Letter to our Community - Responding to recent media re: personal protective equipment at the hospital
April 17, 2020

We feel it is important to respond to recent media reports about personal protective equipment and use of masks at our hospital.

As a hospital, we are very concerned about patient and staff safety and are sensitive to the feelings of our staff during this time of uncertainty. It is a priority for us to be continuously looking at all ways to enhance safety during this unprecedented pandemic.

Amid a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), Waypoint and every hospital in Ontario are following provincial directives, guidelines and technical reports that relate to the use, conservation and stewardship of these supplies. The duration of this pandemic is unknown, and we must ensure we are doing everything we can to conserve supplies for our hospital and the broader health care system while keeping our patients and staff safe.

Waypoint participates on provincial and regional committees to ensure we have the most up to date information for both use and conservation of PPE. Conserving PPE and other safety supplies and maintaining other safety measures are priorities for Waypoint. The uncertainty of how long the pandemic will last and subsequent surges, have all hospitals focusing on the need to conserve and extend the use/time these strategies are required.

We are adhering to provincial directives and guidelines with full PPE being worn in our isolation unit, our geriatric program, as well as for patients who start to demonstrate symptoms. All new admissions while awaiting COVID-19 test results are on the isolation unit. Masks and PPE in these areas adhere to the requirements set out for droplet precautions and are only used once as per provincial directives. Staff are not re-using or storing PPE in these areas.

As an additional precaution beyond adhering to the provincial directives and as a result of the spread of COVID 19 in our community, staff are required to wear surgical masks in clinical areas to minimize asymptomatic transmission between staff and patients. Staff are asked to use these personal masks until they are wet, soiled or damaged, or up to five shifts if they last that long. Staff are also not to store any wet, soiled or damaged PPE in their lockers, rather discard them and obtain another mask.

As things evolve and we receive new directions from public health organizations and the province, these practices may change. Please be assured we are focused on patient and staff safety during this time. We will endeavour to keep our patients, staff, volunteers and community updated on important issues related to COVID-19. To date, we have had no positive cases of COVID-19.