

## **Hawthorne Place Care Centre Town Hall Summary of Presentations and Discussions**

***Hosted by North York General Hospital (NYGH)  
June 22, 2020 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.***

### **Welcome message: Dr. Joshua Tepper, President and CEO, North York General Hospital**

Dr. Joshua Tepper, President and CEO of North York General Hospital (NYGH) welcomed families to the virtual town hall and thanked everyone for taking the time to participate. A moment of silence was held to reflect and pay respect to the residents of Hawthorne Place who died due to COVID-19. Following this, Dr. Tepper started the discussion by acknowledging how extraordinarily difficult the last few months have been for the families and residents at Hawthorne Place as a result of the pandemic.

With North York General overseeing temporary management operations at Hawthorne, family members were provided an overview of the hospital's experience in long-term care (LTC). In addition to owning Seniors' Health Centre, a 192-bed LTC home, NYGH has been working with 22 LTC homes, retirement homes and congregate homes throughout the pandemic to provide testing and infection prevention and control support. The hospital will be bringing this experience to Hawthorne Place. It is currently anticipated that NYGH will be working with Hawthorne Place for 90 days, but this could be shortened or extended.

Since June 4, NYGH has worked alongside Responsive Group management, the Canadian Armed Forces, Hawthorne Place management and front-line staff to become acquainted with the home, operations and needs. This is a collaborative effort with Responsive Group, as well as Hawthorne residents and families.

Before introducing Dr. Kevin Katz, Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at NYGH, Dr. Tepper concluded his remarks by noting the virtual town hall represents NYGH's commitment to open and transparent communications and that this townhall was just one way that communication would be maintained.

### **Infection Control and Prevention (IPAC) and Environmental Cleaning: Dr. Kevin Katz, Medical Director, Infection Prevention and Control, NYGH**

Dr. Kevin Katz, an infectious disease expert and NYGH's Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control, provided family members participating in the town hall with an overview of his team's involvement since arriving at Hawthorne on June 4.

The NYGH team at Hawthorne is a dedicated group specializing in Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and has extensive experience managing outbreaks in other facilities. Over the last few weeks, we have implementing necessary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of those who live and work at Hawthorne. Our priorities include,

establishing proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), ensuring proper cleaning practices of rooms and medical equipment, and quickly identifying potential symptoms in residents and staff to quickly test and implement necessary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are key elements to protecting the health those who live and work at Hawthorne.

NYGH has been working closely with Public Health to ensure consistent and unified messages. Dr. Katz highlighted the good news that Hawthorne is off outbreak and the City of Toronto is moving to Phase 2 of reopening. These positive developments allow us to look at reopening to visitors again at Hawthorne and turn our attention to developing a process to do so safely.

### NYGH onsite management: Susan Kwolek, Executive Lead, NYGH

On June 22, Susan Kwolek, NYGH Executive Lead, started her role leading operations management at Hawthorne. As part of her introduction to families, she shared her plans to meet staff and residents, with hopes of meeting families in the days that follow.

She explained NYGH has submitted a management recovery plan to the Ministry of Health and over the next 90 days will develop action plans focused on quality of care (clinical and physician), leadership and management (occupational health, culture, and engagement) and communication.

Sue informed families that there will be weekly progress updates and committed to sharing these updates with staff, residents and families. She reiterated the over arching goal of making improvements at Hawthorne to ensure quality care while working collaboratively with residents and families to move forward.

### Questions and Answer Session

#### **What measures will North York General take to ensure there will be no further outbreaks?**

North York General is focused on the IPAC practices as well as the environmental cleaning frequency and effectiveness outlined earlier. In addition, there is a government recommendation to limit & reduce occupancy in 4-bed rooms which we will be working to implement throughout the pandemic.

Important to note that in a long-term care home, a single case of COVID-19 can lead to the declaration of an outbreak. COVID is a community spread virus and can be spread by people before they have any symptoms at all. For this reason, it may be unrealistic to completely prevent a future outbreak. Even some of the most outstanding hospitals and homes have had outbreaks. The focus should be on identifying potential cases early and limiting/preventing the spread.

#### **How is North York General going to address other reports, including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and other infractions that have been cited? Are there plans to replace and/or hire more staff?**

There are many sources of information, including the CAF report and our own assessment. It is early days but with Susan Kwolek now on the ground making additional assessments, we will begin to develop a more robust view of what needs to happen. Over the next 90 days we will be looking at what is done well and what needs to improve. This includes quality of care, staffing, equipment, and practices. We anticipate the Ministry of Health wanting a final report as well.

**Is there going to be a new director of care? Communication with family members was substandard prior to the outbreak and messages were often unanswered.**

We are forming relationships with the Executive Director onsite as well as the Vice President from Responsive. While we cannot speak to what happened before NYGH's arrival, we strive for open and transparent communication. This is our commitment.

**There is no air conditioning in the home, how will you address this during hot summer days?**

We know the challenge of no air conditioning; it is a situation many homes across the region are faced with. While fans do help with the heat, they pose a risk from an infection control perspective. Fans in healthcare institutions are not a preferred option because they can blow mold, bacteria, and viruses around. We will be looking into how to best manage the heat.

**How do you isolate patients in the home when there is an outbreak?**

It is possible to maintain appropriate infection control protocols with respiratory viruses in multibed rooms as long as you keep the heads of the beds more than 2m apart and treat the beds essentially as if they separate rooms. Cleaning equipment, new PPE and handwashing are all critical between care episodes to the different bed spaces. In addition, we have a commitment from Responsive Management leadership to reduce the number of beds in the multibed rooms for the duration of the pandemic.

**How do we contact the attending physicians so we can schedule a case conference?**

We understand the stress and frustration of not being able to connect with lead physicians. We are looking at the physician teams including how to best address this concern.

**If the improvements are not made, what will be the consequences?**

There is strong interest from government in our activities and the management role we have been asked to play. We are in weekly conversations with government, our recovery plan has been shared and there is a high degree of oversight of all hospitals who are taking a similar role. Our job is to set clear goals posts, work collaboratively, and ensure we met those posts and report back.

**Are Responsive Group Board Members going to be held accountable for letting this catastrophe occur?**

This would fall under the authority of the provincial government. However, North York General has committed to making changes moving forward and to ensuring our work and changes are sustainable. Our hope is we will have success and we will stay engaged to ensure that quality of care and responsibility is there. In addition to our commitment, Responsive Management has used Accreditation Canada in the past and have been advised that they will come back and do a spot check without notice to ensure the home is meeting high standards.

**What will happen after the 90 days, will Responsive Management remain the management company?**

Our goal is to stabilize and set a path forward in which we have collective comfort. Our current understanding is that Responsive Group will regain management. However, the government has very strong levers and controls over this and if goals are not met, the NYGH engagement with Hawthorne place could be extended by government.

**What about other health conditions outside of COVID-19? A lot of conditions have been ignored because of the pandemic.**

This has been a concern across the entire healthcare system throughout the pandemic. We will oversee a care model to ensure all health and mental health needs are met as we move forward.

**Is there an opportunity to create an environment where families can come together and review issues?**

Engaging families is crucial, and we will be looking at various ways to ensure this happens.

**With visitation maybe being allowed soon, is there enough PPE and will visitors require a test?**

Yes, we have sufficient PPE and North York General commits to ensuring an adequate supply during our management of Hawthorne. In regard to visitor access resuming, the government has set out guidelines that visitors to long-term care homes will be required to have a test within the 2-weeks prior to the visit. Full details on how we will manage visitors will be shared soon. Beyond a test, what is most crucial is that everyone be aware of their own health. If you have even the mildest symptoms, please do not visit any healthcare facility. We look forward to welcoming you back, but to stop the spread of COVID we must remain vigilant and work together.

**We live out of country, once the borders have opened again, would there be any restrictions to coming to visit?**

Difficult to say what the federal government may do with the borders and how it will impact healthcare facilities. With the Quarantine Act invoked, international travellers to Canada must quarantine for 14 days.

**How do we connect with your Executive Lead?**

Please email [hawthorne@nygh.on.ca](mailto:hawthorne@nygh.on.ca).

**Closing Comments: Dr. Joshua Tepper**

Dr. Tepper thanked everyone who took time to call in. He let participants know that several members of the NYGH team had also called-in so they could hear directly from families and begin to understand their perspectives and needs. He reaffirmed how difficult the last several months have been and added that he is hopeful the virtual town hall was the start of a path forward with communication, transparency and accountability.