

# COVID'S THIRD WAVE PUTTING MASSIVE STRAIN ON AREA HOSPITALS

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Halton residents need look no further than their own communities to find hospitals under tremendous duress: surging numbers of COVID-19 patients, ICUs at capacity, exhausted doctors and nurses and staff shortages.

"The third wave has challenged hospitals like never before," said Cindy McDonnell, SVP Clinical Operations, Halton Healthcare. "This presentation is related to the increase in prevalence of variants of concern. COVID-19 patients in our hospitals today are younger, very sick and many need intensive care. We are seeing many more COVID-19 patients in our ICUs than we did in Wave 1 or Wave 2."

At Burlington's Joseph Brant Hospital, capacity

has been hovering around 95 per cent and reached full capacity two weeks ago, said Dr. Ian Preyra, Joseph Brant Hospital's chief of staff.

"In just two weeks, the number of COVID-19 patients in our care has more than doubled and continues to increase daily. If this upward trend continues, hospitals will be overwhelmed," said Preyra.

ICU patients include both Halton and non-Halton patients, COVID and non-COVID patients.

All non-urgent surgeries and procedures have been halted with only oncology and urgent life-saving procedures being booked, he said.

Seven intensive care beds have been added in the past week, bringing the total to 31 beds; with the addition of these beds, JBH has "limited capacity."

"In terms of resources, there is a shortage of health-care workers across the province, and we're doing our best to provide quality care for our patients with those limited resources," said Preyra.

Between the three hospitals within Halton Healthcare, Milton District Hospital has 10 ICU beds, Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital has 24 and Georgetown Hospital has three.

As of April 16, four ICU beds were added in an Halton Healthcare acute care unit.

"However, our ability to care for patients in these beds is largely dependent on staffing availability," said McDonnell.

COVID plans and strategies to ensure the provision of essential health-care services to communities includes such things as the

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building of two internal field hospitals to create additional capacity, and working with home and community care partners to provide resources and support to care for people in their own homes when possible, said McDonnell.

The ability of Halton hospitals to accept more patients, including ICU patients, is assessed every day and reported to the GTA Incident Management System, a province-initiated plan which monitors hospital capacity needs in real time, and has the authority to move patients to and

from hospitals, said McDonnell.

Halton Healthcare capacity is a fluid situation that changes on a daily basis, she said.

The shortage of health-care workers, especially critical-care nurses, is province-wide; both Halton Healthcare and JBH are actively recruiting staff.

"The surge in patients presents a challenge with respect to the additional work required and the need to protect and preserve health human resources," said McDonnell.

"Our teams have done

an amazing job of making sure we are able to accept these patients and provide them with the care they require all while ensuring our communities' health-care needs continue to be met."

Along with other hospitals in Ontario, both Halton Healthcare and JBH have implemented a teams model, or multidisciplinary approach to care delivery.

The team composition and size are adjusted depending on how sick the patient is and staff availability, said McDonnell.

Emergent and urgent care are the priority as elective activities are reduced allowing the redeployment of staff to other areas of the hospital, she said.

"We are taking deliberate action to maintain our hospital capacity; however, the actions taken by individuals in the community will make the biggest difference. We urge the public to please follow public health guidance," said Preyra.



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