



London Health
Sciences Centre



Children's Hospital
London Health Sciences Centre

2020/2021 Annual Report



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WELCOME MESSAGE

Children's Hospital was born of challenge. Founded in 1917, a year before the end of the First World War and the 'Spanish' influenza pandemic (which claimed the lives of almost 9,000 Ontarians), the hospital and its physicians, staff and volunteers have been repeatedly tested and found steadfast, resourceful and resilient.

This past year has been one of similar challenge as a new pandemic continued to infect Ontarians and place a terrible burden on our health-care system. But, as you will read, we remain undeterred from our mission to deliver outstanding care to children not only in London but the Southwest and further afield. Once more, we have been tested and once more we have been found unbowed by the pressures placed upon us.

Looking ahead, we are recommitting to our record of excellence in care, focused on stabilizing our part of the health-care system (including the wellness of our people), learning from the lessons of the pandemic, continuing to collaborate with our partners, and contributing to the transformation of Ontario's health-care system.

Balancing patient safety and wellness at Children's Hospital

London Health Sciences Centre's Children's Hospital staff and physicians are working hard during the COVID-19 pandemic to balance safety needs and infection control, while maintaining patient and family-centered care. The negative emotional and psychological impact on patients, families, care providers, and our staff and physicians became evident early on in the pandemic.

During the third wave of the pandemic, leadership advocated for changes to the visitor policy in support of patient wellness while recognizing the need to ensure staff, physician, patient and family safety through rigorous infection control standards. Children's Hospital has been permitted to provide access to two essential care providers (one present at a time) to our paediatric patients. We have been able to grant "Special Circumstances" on the basis of patient condition and family needs. One of these "Special Circumstances" permits long-stay patients with "family days" enabling a patient to have family members visit for a specified amount of time on one particular day. We are working to provide compassionate care to our young patients and help keep them connected with their families during these unprecedented times.



Paediatric Critical Care Unit supporting urgent need for adult care

During the third wave of the pandemic, the need for adult critical care beds exceeded the available space and resources. The teams in the Paediatric Critical Care Unit (PCCU) and adult Critical Care and Trauma Unit (CCTC) worked together to ensure the availability of three beds in the PCCU for the care of non-COVID adult patients if needed.

This change required the implementation of a new staffing model that combined adult and paediatric critical care nurses, with a focus on nursing teams. The first adult patient was transferred to PCCU on April 30. In total, three adult patients were cared for in the PCCU over the course of a week. Children's Hospital continued to provide high-quality care to both our paediatric and adult patients during this time.

This unprecedented collaboration between adult and paediatric critical care units highlights our core values at Children's Hospital of compassion, curiosity, accountability, and teamwork.



Supporting patients and families during difficult times

Children's Hospital provides support to patients and their families through many programs, including the [Paediatric Family Resource Centre](#) and the [Youth CoRE](#) program. Both programs provide individualized support to patients and their families through facilitators who have lived experiences with Children's Hospital, either as family members or former patients.

The Paediatric Family Resource Centre's facilitators continue to assist patients and families during the pandemic in providing support from helping fill out forms for financial assistance to bringing coffee to the bedside.

The Youth CoRE facilitators connect with adolescents to provide much needed social interaction for teens being treated at Children's Hospital, especially with the restrictions on visitors due to the pandemic. This can range from playing a game on Nintendo Switch to having discussions about their realities as teens with medical needs.

Many programs like these are funded by the Children's Hospital Foundation.





Paediatric Minor Procedure Room

During the first wave of the pandemic, there were 574 surgery cancellations at Children's Hospital. This backlog would have required 44 net new Operating Room (OR) days to address. In 2020, the Ministry of Health offered one-time funding to provide support for growing surgical wait lists. To minimize the detrimental impact on the development of children waiting for surgery due to the pandemic, Children's Hospital used this funding to open a Paediatric Minor Procedure Room. The funding received from November 2020 to March 2021 supported the resumption of paediatric surgeries and reduced surgical backlog pressures. The Paediatric Medical Day Unit (PMDU), in collaboration with the surgical and OR departments repurposed a Minor Procedure Room to dedicate to paediatric patients, who would normally have procedures done in the main OR. This resulted in increasing the paediatric surgical cases, reducing the wait list, and providing more OR time for advanced surgical procedures.

This change has resulted in increased capacity, enhanced experience for patients, families and staff, and improved service safety, quality, and efficiency. Children's Hospital is going to continue to support the Paediatric Minor Procedure Room, and will study outcomes to show that this approach is superior to doing these procedures in the main OR.

Seeking COVID-19 therapies for children

Dr. Douglas Fraser, a scientist with the Children's Health Research Institute, has conducted multiple studies and published more than eight papers over the past year focusing on different aspects of the body's response to the coronavirus. In April 2021, he published a paper examining the impact of the multi-system inflammatory syndrome associated with COVID-19 in children and identified potential biomarkers for therapeutic response. His work is helping advance our knowledge of the impact of the COVID-19 virus on children and potential development of therapies. This is extremely important, especially for younger children, as the vaccine has not yet been approved for their use.





Minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on education

Training learners is part of Children's Hospital's clinical, research and education mandate. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners was immediate when all student placements were halted in March 2020. At Children's Hospital learners are found primarily in our inpatient units, the Paediatric Medical Day Unit and the Emergency Department.

In living our values, especially teamwork, we were able to have the majority of learners back in hospital by July with minimal impact to their education. There are some schools that have chosen to provide a virtual program to certain learners, like medical secretaries, which has led to a reduction in non-nursing learners.

With the creation of communities in late 2020 which limits the movement of staff across units and sites, our clinical units have worked together to find additional opportunities to make up for this limitation. Overall numbers of nursing students have remained the same. Our student affairs and clinical leadership worked collaboratively with our education partners to ensure a safe return for our learners, including developing policies and procedures for working with COVID-19 positive patients.

Virtual Emergency Clinic

Children's Hospital responded to the concerns of parents who were hesitant to bring their children to the Emergency Department by creating a [Virtual Emergency Clinic](#). This clinic provides parents with a consult with a paediatric emergency room physician by video to discuss the child's condition and together, determine if their child requires emergency care or an alternate level of care such as seeing a primary care provider. Since May, 2020, the clinical team at Children's Hospital has delivered exceptional quality and care to approximately 2,200 patients through this virtual program.



Virtual urgent care initiatives

As a result of the success of Children's Hospital's Virtual Emergency Clinic, the Ministry of Health subsequently funded 12 regionally coordinated, high-capacity [virtual urgent care](#) initiatives for all ages as part of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario. The difference is these virtual care appointments permit for the diagnosing and prescription of treatment. Children's Hospital at LHSC is collaborating with Ontario Health, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, Hamilton Health Sciences, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care to design and implement this virtual care program for the entire Ontario West population. On February 22nd, 2021, the pilot formally launched including a website ([urgent.careontario.ca](#)) and a toll-free number (1-844-227-3844) that routes to the respective hospital the patient is seeking service.

Staying connected with our partners

The leadership at children's hospital through the Maternal, Newborn Child and Youth Network (MNCYN) remained connected with all our regional partners to discuss their issues and offer support should they become overwhelmed with current pandemic. Rapid safe transfer and retro transfer of patients were two of the issues addressed.



Shared Decision Making becomes virtual

One way our patients in the epilepsy program at Children's Hospital are supported is through the Shared Decision Making program, which provides support by a decision coach to paediatric patients and families facing brain surgery for epilepsy. This process which provides information and a patient-centered approach throughout the care journey was a quality improvement initiative. It eased decision making and increased decision satisfaction and knowledge among the patients and their families when a Shared Decision Making coach was engaged. During the pandemic, the consults with the decision making coach have moved to an online format which provided the patients and families with greater flexibility for meeting times and less need for trips to Children's Hospital.

