

Health Sciences North 2021 Annual General Meeting

Report from the Chief of Staff
Dr. John Fenton



Health Sciences North
Horizon Santé-Nord

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Annual General Meeting – June 16, 2020

Even during the pandemic of the century, we were still able to achieve many productive and positive goals. To me, this is a testament to the dedication and resilience of our people. I feel fortunate to work with exceptional individuals and teams who continue to demonstrate their commitment to improving care for patients and making HSN a better place. It is with gratitude that I serve the members of the Medical Staff, the organization and the community as your Chief of Staff.

Thank you to members of the Medical Advisory Committee, the Senior Leadership Committee and to members of the Professional Staff for your ongoing support. I could not do this without you. Making progress is truly a team effort.

As your Chief of Staff, it is my pleasure to report on my 2020-2021 performance goals and the activities of the medical staff at HSN this past year.

While the COVID-19 created many new challenges for recruitment, 11 new family medicine physicians, and 19 new specialists have been successfully recruited to Sudbury in the 2020- 2021 recruitment year, thanks to the partnership between HSN, the City of Greater Sudbury and the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. This is the largest group of new recruits in one year to our community to date. HSN welcomed specialists in Respiriology, Pediatrics, Anaesthesia, General Surgery, General Internal Medicine, Cardiology, Pathology, Radiology, Otorhinolaryngology, Medical Oncology, Psychiatry, Orthopedic Surgery, and Gastroenterology. Having new physicians from such a wide range of specialities greatly improves access to care for the people of Northeastern Ontario for now and many years to come.

Recruitment efforts are also well underway for the 2021-2022 recruitment year, with 21 confirmed recruits already this year! Thank you to everyone involved in bringing these new physicians to HSN, it truly takes a village to make this happen.

I would like to warmly welcome all the physicians who have joined our teams.

Outcome #5 of our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan calls for inter-professional proactive external reviews to take place in a majority of our Medical Departments by 2024.

In 2020, we completed the inter-professional external review focused on improving the quality of care in our Surgical Program.

Three colleagues from Kingston Health Sciences Centre and London Health Sciences Centre completed a comprehensive on-site review in November 2020. The external reviewers spoke highly of the quality of care provided at HSN and throughout the region. They shared 11 overall recommendations, suggestions for each surgical sub-specialty and specific recommendations for the Endoscopy Unit. Implementation of these recommendations will further enhance our Surgical Program.

To ensure compliance with the criteria identified by Accreditation Canada specifically for the “Do Not Use” list of abbreviations, a multidisciplinary project team has led improvement efforts to achieve the target of 50% reduction in the use of Do Not Use abbreviations, symbols and dose designations. I

would like to thank the project team and the medical staff for their focused efforts to achieve, exceed and sustain these results. Your commitment to achieving this patient safety improvement which is an Accreditation Canada Required Organizational Practice is very much appreciated.

In July 2019, HSN launched a comprehensive collaboration with the Joint Department of Medical Imaging, a multi-hospital department that already serves five hospital sites belonging to the University Health Network, Sinai Health System and Women's College Hospital.

Over the past two years, under the leadership of Dr. Heidi Schmidt, Chief and Medical Director of our Medical Imaging Program, we have seen many improvements including reduced turn-around times for reporting, enhanced protocols and the implementation of new procedures.

On February 15, 2021, a new collaboration with three (3) sub-specialty trained Radiologists from the Emergency Department of Unity Health Toronto was implemented to provide evening and weekend coverage for HSN. This collaboration with Unity Health has eliminated the need for a third party remote radiology service, further enhancing sub-specialty reporting.

What this means is that, whenever possible, a patient's imaging is reported by the most appropriate sub-specialty trained Radiologist, which in turn, improves the quality of the reporting and improves the quality of care.

We are very proud of this ground breaking collaboration and are looking forward to welcoming an additional eight (8) sub-specialty trained radiologists who will be joining the department in 2021.

Finally, under the leadership of the Medical Human Resources Planning Committee, an organizational review was completed to identify the future medical staff workforce needs. It was identified that by January 2024, approximately 36% of our current HSN medical staff (96 physicians) will be at or nearing the age of retirement (at or above the age of 60). The departments of Medicine, Psychiatry and Pathology were identified as having a high proportion of medical staff eligible for retirement in the next three to five years. Focused efforts will be required to ensure seamless transitions between retirements and new recruitment to sustain current service delivery models.

I would be remiss, if I didn't take the opportunity to reflect upon the efforts of the Medical Staff related to COVID-19. These efforts have been evident across the organization, at every level, and have ensured that HSN was and is well positioned to manage every curveball that COVID can throw at us.

We are very fortunate to have a team of extremely dedicated physicians looking at the best evidence for diagnosis, management and treatment for the patients that come in with COVID-19 symptoms.

Dr. David Boyle, Dr. Mark Henderson, Dr. Rob Lepage, Dr. Derek Manchuk, Dr. Roger Sandre, Dr. Josée Thériault and Dr. Susan Vokey all served at Incident Command and have been invaluable leaders in guiding and providing direction.

I would like to extend my thanks to our medical leadership team which is comprised of our Chiefs of Departments, our Medical Directors and our Medical Staff Executive. This team of dedicated leaders have ensured that challenges and questions arising from our medical staff have been addressed in a timely fashion. They have also kept our medical staff informed with the most current information and decisions made through Incident Command.

Many more of you have contributed to things like the COVID Assessment Centre, the surgical program ramp up and then ramp down, the implementation of the Virtual Emergency Department, Critical Care

surge planning, vaccine roll-out, protocol development and departmental preparedness. The words “thank you” seem wholly inadequate to express my gratitude as your efforts have been exemplary.

Over the past year, I have also had the pleasure of collaborating with the Chiefs of Staff across the Northeast to ensure open dialogue regarding regional issues from rural and acute care hospitals. Thank you for all that you do to serve the patients and families of throughout the Northeast.

Despite the demands of the pandemic, our teams at HSN have also continued to introduce new and innovative surgeries and procedures as we continuously improve on providing the best in patient care.

HSN is one of the first hospitals in the North to launch SeamlessMD as part of Ontario Health’s recent Remote Patient Monitoring initiative for safer care at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The app allows surgical programs to virtually connect and support patients at home before and after surgery. So far the team has rolled out the app in both official languages for hip and knee replacement surgery patients.

Patients needing hip and knee replacements are also benefiting from less invasive surgical approaches. This means instead of staying in hospital for two or three days, these patients are now able to go home on either the day of the procedure or the following day.

New surgeries have been introduced for breast and colon cancer, cardiac care, as well as for patients needing shoulder, liver and pancreatic surgeries. These new procedures are possible because of important upgrades made to our operating room and cardiac labs to allow for more complex procedures to take place that are less invasive leading to less time in hospital for patients.

Blue Light Technology was one of them. This is a surgery geared to patients with bladder cancer. Surgeons use blue light to find small cancer lesions and tumors to remove, that would not have been visual in other procedures. It causes tumors to show up as bright pink under blue light, making them much easier to see.

We have new equipment for Pulmonary Vein Isolation for cardiac patients. This is a minimally invasive procedure involving an IV into the patient’s hand which helps to restore regular heartbeat to patients. There’s far less sedation needed for this procedure and patients recover over a course of three to six hours.

The Peripheral Nerve Block Catheter program was started in November 2020 by the Anesthesia Department and Acute Pain Service department at HSN. Instead of staying in hospital, patients are now being sent home with a pump for pain control after surgery. Before this program, only 2% of patients were going home the day of their surgery because pain control needed to be taken care of in hospital. Now, 24% of our patients have been able to go home.

A new stroke treatment was also introduced at HSN this past year. It’s called Endovascular Therapy or Stroke EVT for short. It’s a treatment that removes large stroke-causing clots from the brain with miraculous results. Patients who are eligible for the treatment can see dramatic reductions in disabilities and it significantly reduces the chance of death from a stroke. HSN is one of only 11 EVT centres in the province to perform this procedure and the only one in Northeastern Ontario to offer this treatment.

Looking to the year ahead, my performance goals approved by the Board of Directors for 2021-2022 include the following:

- 1) Ensure HSN’s continued readiness to provide care for COVID-19 patients.

- 2) Build and implement a Just Culture quality framework for the review of cases at the Medical Quality Assurance Committee and enhance alignment, where system level quality issues are identified, with the Quality of Care Review Committee.
- 3) Successfully sustain the collaboration with the Joint Department of Medical Imaging (JDMI) with a minimum of nine Sudbury-based full-time equivalents radiologists and continued support from on-site JDMI radiologist presence. Continue to enhance access to subspecialists and implement specialized radiologist after hours/weekend coverage.
- 4) Complete an inter-professional external review of the Medicine Program and update Terms of Reference of future reviews as required.
- 5) Support and champion the successful implementation of the regional Electronic Medical Record in April 2023, with adequate attention to change management.
- 6) Implement a minimum of one leadership development session focused on building the skills and capabilities of our medical leaders.
- 7) Integrate and align Medical Human Resource planning with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.
- 8) Achieve the targets articulated in the 2021-2022 Quality Improvement Plan.

I am looking forward to working with you to continue to evolve as an organization and to continue to improve HSN's delivery of quality care for our community.

Thank you.