



Hospital Improvement Plan

The case for ...

Women's & Children's Health

Be Informed

The Niagara Health System was directed to submit a Hospital Improvement Plan to our Local Health Integration Network on July 15, 2008.

The Plan makes a number of recommendations to provide quality and safe health care to Niagarans and make the best use of our resources.

We invite you to learn more about the many recommendations in the Hospital Improvement Plan, at www.niagarahealth.on.ca. Click on the green Hospital Improvement Plan box.

Let the facts form your opinion and have your say in the 'Your Input' survey section on our website. Or, call 905-378-4647 ext. 43107.

Quick Facts

- There is a steady decline in Niagara's birth rate, which will continue into the future.
- Most paediatric patients are not admitted to hospital. Most are treated as outpatients, due to new treatments.
- A single Centre of Excellence for Women's & Children's Health would be located at the new health-care complex in St. Catharines.
- 90% of Niagara residents are within

Submitted by the following Obstetricians and Gynecologists from across Niagara ...
Doctors Wojciech Bedkowski, Anthony Chan, Naheed Chaudhry, Gurnam Cheema, Andrzej Dobosiewicz, Robert Nowicki, Marquis Okon, Rathnakar Shetty, Jerzy Sternadel, Johan Viljoen, Muthulakshmi Yegappan

Creating a Centre of Excellence for Women's and Children's Health at the future health-care complex in St. Catharines is one of the elements of our overall vision to improve patient care across Niagara into the future.

The proposed Centre would shift our current focus on women of childbearing age to women's care across all ages – from those who need obstetrical care, to health services for menopausal and post-menopausal women.

This Centre of Excellence also would provide care to infants, children and youth up to age 18 who require paediatric care. Our vision for women's care includes breast screening, bone densitometry, gynecology and other female-specific care, targeting the majority of our female population, which is approaching or over age 50. The facts and rationale around this exciting change are outlined below.

Currently, our Maternal Child Program offers a range of services at Greater Niagara General Site, St. Catharines General Site and Welland Hospital Site to support obstetrical patients from prenatal care, through labour/delivery and post-partum care. As well as providing care to moms, our hospitals offer



inpatient and outpatient care to children from birth to age 17. Both obstetric and paediatric patients with complex conditions are transferred to larger tertiary-care hospitals in Hamilton and Toronto for highly-specialized care.

Combining Services

The number of births in NHS hospitals has decreased in the last six years by 346, from 3,313 live births in 2002 to 2,967 live births in our last fiscal year (April/07 to March/08). This slow but steady declining birth rate will continue, as the Niagara population ages. Population projections show that by 2011 the child/youth population will decline by 6.7% and the number of women of child-bearing age (16 to 44) will decline by 2.1%.

Extensive research studies show that the lower the number of deliveries in an obstetrical unit, the higher the risk for both mother and baby. A 10-year research study in Germany and Norway concludes that the chance of neonatal death increases if the number of low-risk deliveries is below 2,000

per year in a single delivery unit [*Heller, G. et al; Moster, D. et al*].

In Niagara, the number of hospital births in fiscal 2007-08 was as follows: Greater Niagara General Site – 968; St. Catharines General Site – 1,285; and Welland Hospital Site – 716. Individually, each of these sites delivers less than the optimal threshold of 2,000 births in a single location. The combined total for all three sites was 2,967 births, well over the threshold shown to reduce risk of mortality for newborns.

Not only do international studies show the benefits of creating a centre of excellence to bring together all appropriate patients for critical mass, studies and reviews close to home recommend the same. The NHS Maternal Child Program underwent an external review by well-known clinical experts in December 2004 [*Livingstone, Ejwunmi, Hickey*].

The following are key recommendations from this review:

- Planning in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care should begin to identify a mechanism and appropriate site for a single centre of excellence for women's and infant's health on one site to

over ...

Quick Facts

- a 30-minute drive of the new hospital location in St. Catharines.
- Emergency Departments and Prompt Care Centres throughout the NHS will continue to provide emergency care for mothers, babies, children and youth.

“Childbirth is a very sensitive and emotional experience. Creating a centre of excellence where we can concentrate all of our resources is an opportunity we can’t afford to miss. Already we are having to contend with staffing, equipment and patient safety issues in providing maternity services at three sites.

“In five years we will not have enough doctors and nurses to staff three units. By bringing the units together we will not only be staffed at appropriate levels, we will also be able to provide more specialized services than we are providing today.”

Dr. Johan Viljoen,
NHS Regional Chief of
Obstetrics &
Gynecology

Women’s & Children’s Health *cont’d ...*

- serve the entire NHS.
- Consideration should be given to the inclusion of gynecology in the Maternal Child Program, converting this to a Women’s and Children’s Health Program.
- Consolidate all Level II (Special Care) Nurseries at one regional site with the recruitment of a Paediatrician with additional training and expertise in neonatology to ensure delivery of appropriate levels of care at that site.

Concentrating all care and support resources in one location will enhance the level of care for women and children. Another very real benefit is the new opportunity having a critical patient mass will bring to train tomorrow’s obstetricians, gynecologists and pediatricians. Having medical students and residents train in Niagara through the McMaster University Medical School is vital to recruit future specialists, particularly when the average age of our specialists now is 57.

Staff Shortages

Our health-care providers – physicians, midwives, RNs and RPNs specializing in labour and delivery, post-partum, special care nursery and paediatrics – are in short supply. Ensuring adequate nursing and physician coverage for each shift is becoming difficult, as our staff nears retirement age and recruitment becomes more challenging provincially,

nationally and internationally. The Canadian Nursing Association reports that last year, there were 9,447 nursing graduates in Canada, compared to the need for 12,000 graduates each year. Therefore, from a staffing perspective, centralizing the Maternal/Child program is really the only possible way we can continue to provide quality and safe patient care.

Travel Time

Of course, quick access to care is essential for labouring mothers and mapping methodology shows that travel time for 90% of Niagara residents to the new health-care complex in St. Catharines will be 30 minutes or less – shorter than travel times to hospitals for many patients in the greater Toronto area and elsewhere in Ontario.

Paediatric Care

Currently, only four per cent of all children coming to our Emergency Departments become hospital inpatients. Paediatricians treat the majority of the children they see in their office.

The new centre for children under 18 will feature a 24-bed paediatric unit, including three beds for continuous monitoring of a critically-ill child, such as a severe respiratory condition. As well, for the first time in Niagara, four beds will be assigned for children and youth requiring hospitalization for mental health issues. A wide range of outpatient services, including day surgery and medical day

care, will be provided and clinics for chronic disease management, such as asthma and diabetes, will also be offered.

Emergency Care

It is important to note that emergency care for mothers, babies, children and youth will continue to be provided within all of the NHS’s designated Emergency Departments and Prompt Care Centres. Currently, 96 per cent of paediatric patients coming to our Emergency Dep’ts are treated and released the same day.

We also want to enhance the services we offer, something not possible with our current three-site program. Providing a post-partum depression clinic has long been required, but the resources are simply not here right now to do that. Having a single Centre of Excellence will enable us to provide follow-up care for osteoporosis and breast cancer, reducing the need for women to travel outside Niagara for care.

Our vision is ambitious, but we feel that this is the health care Niagara deserves and needs. Over the next five years, we will be working with our partners to accomplish a better-care model. We welcome the public’s feedback on the vision for change we’ve proposed. We invite you to learn more about the many recommendations in the Hospital Improvement Plan, by going to www.niagarahealth.on.ca. Let the facts form your opinion and have your say in the ‘Your Input’ survey section on our website.