

Bancroft COVID-19 Assessment Centre now testing walk-in patients



June 16, 2020 By Nate Smelle

The COVID-19 Assessment Centre at the Quinte Health Care Hospital in Bancroft is now accepting walk-in patients interested in being tested for the virus.

Acknowledging the importance of testing in preventing a second wave of COVID-19 from spreading, the hospital's manager Tammy Davis said the decision to see walk-in patients is part of their efforts to "make testing as accessible as possible." Thanks to a partnership between QHC and Hastings Quinte Paramedic Services, she said people with mobility or transportation issues can now be tested at home. Employers interested in having their employees tested can now, with their staff's consent, have the tests administered at the workplace.

Recognizing that family members are allowed to visit loved ones in long-term care facilities if they have tested negative for COVID-19 within the last two weeks, both Davis and Dr. Brown expect to see more people coming in to be tested. To prevent a large group from forming in the waiting room, Dr. Brown said if there are several people already waiting to be tested walk-ins will be given an appointment time to return for the test.

"Ideally it is by appointment," said Dr. Brown. "If all of a sudden we have five walk-ins, we don't want people mulling around the waiting room, waiting to get a test. We don't want large groups of anybody, so ideally it's best to call in and get a time because then we can space people out."

Providing the public with insight into what to expect when being tested, Dr. Brown said it basically consists of a nasal swab. The test is not painful, she said, but it does leave the patient with the feeling one gets when jumping into the water and they get water up their nose. Explaining why it is so essential for people to be tested, Dr. Brown said "What we need to do is find people as early as possible. So, we need to see if say 'Joe Smith' is positive and then we need to see who he has been in contact with, find all of them, isolate and test them to see who has got it. That's the way we can stop it. We need to make sure that one person isn't going to spread it to a whole bunch of people. The earlier we can do that the test and the earlier we can know, the better."

If anyone is feeling sick at all, Dr. Brown said it is a good idea to get tested. Davis added that if someone is feeling "perfectly fine" they probably don't need to be tested unless they are frequently in contact with a lot of other people. Providing an example of someone who might be asymptomatic that still should be tested, she said "If you are a business owner and you are seeing a lot of people coming through, you may want to get tested just to try and catch it before you get symptoms."

Taking a proactive stance with making COVID-19 testing accessible to those who need it, Dr. Brown said the centre has been reaching out to local grocery stores, hardware stores, and taxi companies to see if they are interested in having their staff tested. Noting that in North Hastings they "did not have a positive swab in all of May," she said so far North Hastings has been "lucky." Thanking the public for participating in physical distancing, she said it is crucial for people to continue with such preventative measure because "the problem is that we may yet get another wave. People are travelling, people are visiting from other places, people moving from other places, or it could just spread from a town around us."

Expressing her gratitude to the local business community for their support during the pandemic, Davis added "We need to send a kudos out to local businesses and the efforts that they are making to prevent the spread. Certainly with the grocery store is cleaning the carts, having the handwash there, asking screening questions and having social distancing. I think that's a big part of why we don't have spread here in the community." Extending her thankfulness as well to the many businesses that donated PPE and medical supplies to the hospital at the beginning of the pandemic, Dr. Brown advises business owners now in need of these supplies as the province begins Stage-2 of re-opening the economy to contact Davis at: 613-332-2825 ext. 6232; or by email at tdavis@qhc.on.ca.

The COVID-19 Assessment Centre in Bancroft is located at the hospital at 1 Manor Lane in Bancroft, and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. Until 6 p.m. To book an appointment, call 613-332-2825, ext.6222.