

Cardiology services return to Bancroft

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Cardiology services will be returning to the Bancroft area through the team work of Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Unit and the Bancroft Family Health Team, Dr. Parambir Singh and Dr. Alexander Ferreira. The cardiology program's return to Bancroft was announced during the June 1 meeting of the Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Board. Dr. Ethan Toumishey said that starting on June 23 the cardiology services will be held at the Bancroft public health office at 1 Manor Lane once a month. The Kawartha Cardiology team will provide services from the Bancroft public health office one day per month to start and have the capacity to see 20-30 clients each day. The efforts of the Bancroft Family Health Team, Dr. Parambir Singh Keila and Dr. Alexander Ferreira, have made this possible. **COVID-19 numbers drop** Toumishey also gave a report on the number of cases of COVID-19. She said that the pandemic is not over as the number of cases continue to circulate. However, the numbers are heading in the right direction. Since the last board meeting there has been an encouraging decline in the number of high-risk cases in the community from 357 to 39. This positive trend is largely due to the ongoing efforts of residents who have continued to follow public health recommendations and have gotten vaccinated, said Toumishey. I want to thank residents for continuing to be cautious and making responsible choices such as staying home when sick and getting all recommended vaccines. These steps will continue to protect those who are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19. He asks that the public remain vigilant, and to be sure to take the necessary precautionary steps to limit the spread of the virus. **Monkeypox** So far there have been no cases of Monkeypox in the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. Toumishey says that Public Health staff will be keeping an eye on the numbers and the data on the cases of the disease. He said that the emergence of Monkeypox underscores the importance of ongoing surveillance of communicable diseases. Toumishey told the board that while hearing about a new virus when still within the COVID-19 pandemic is worrisome, evidence shows that Monkeypox is not as transmissible or as severe as COVID-19. Basic public health measures that Toumishey says everyone should be practicing at all times, will work to prevent the spread of Monkeypox. These includes measures like: staying home when sick or you have skin sores, practicing respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes and wearing a face mask, practicing good hand hygiene, and practicing safer sex. In addition, avoid close physical contact, including sexual contact, with an individual who is suspected or confirmed to have Monkeypox. The public can learn more about monkeypox at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/monkeypox.html>. Harm Reduction Program update Stephanie McFaul, manager of Clinical Services and epidemiologist Yvonne DeWit provided an update on the Harm Reduction Program activities, saying that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the growing opioid overdose epidemic in the two counties. From 2019 to 2021 there was an 80 per cent increase in the number of overdose deaths in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. In 2020 there were 28 deaths and in 2021 the preliminary data shows 29 deaths. Of the 28 deaths in 2020, 20 (71 per cent) were male and over half (54 per cent) were individuals between the ages of 25 and 44. Throughout the pandemic provision of harm reduction and overdose prevention services remained a priority for HPEPH and staff worked to adapt to the evolving needs of clients to provide easy access to the harm reduction and overdose prevention services that the health unit provides. HPEPH, in with community partners, were able to distribute 2,063 naloxone kits in 2020 and 1,665 in 2021, as well as other safer drug use supplies which support single use equipment and reduce the risk of blood-borne infections. McFaul said that community partnerships were essential in meeting the basic needs of some of the region's most vulnerable populations, and HPEPH continues to work with local and regional community and health care partners to plan, implement and evaluate activities and partnerships to support harm reduction efforts. If you or someone you know is struggling with drug use and would like support, visit the HPEPH Getting Help page. To protect yourself and others, be aware of the signs of an overdose and pick up a free naloxone kit. Naloxone is available at many local locations, including many pharmacies. For a list of locations where naloxone is available, visit hpepublichealth.ca/safer-drug-use.