

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, December 14, 2020

Message to the community from Dr. Johan Viljoen

Earlier today, we witnessed history as Anita Quidangen, a worker in the long-term care sector received Canada's first COVID-19 vaccination.

While this is a positive development, the pandemic is not over. This cannot be stressed enough.

The reality is that we are seeing an increasing number of cases in Niagara and a spike in the number of COVID patients requiring hospitalization. We are currently caring for 35 patients with COVID-19 in the hospital and we are managing outbreaks at our Extended Care Unit in Welland and in two units at the Greater Niagara General Site. Our dedicated staff and physicians are working to their fullest capacity to provide safe, high-quality care to our community.

But we need the community's help.

The only way we can hope to be successful against this highly contagious virus is for everyone to do their part. We know everyone wants to return to normal as quickly as possible. We're not at that point yet. Everyone must adhere to the COVID-19 safety protocols. It is essential to keep yourselves and others healthy in our community.

Our greatest fear is that, with the holiday season upon us, older adults will be put at-risk at celebrations or other gatherings. Even if you believe yourself to be healthy, please think of those who may be more vulnerable to serious forms of COVID. The only way you can be sure you're not transmitting this virus as an asymptomatic carrier is to not put yourself in close contact with others. This season, please do not gather with anyone outside your household, no matter the size of the gathering.

If we do not slow the rate of infection, the strain on the healthcare system will continue to increase. We have worked hard to resume surgical procedures for patients who need care. We do not want to be put in a position where we are forced to cancel procedures again. Unfortunately, it is very easy to imagine a scenario where the hospital becomes overwhelmed with COVID patients, which is why we need to commit to the safety protocols in a very serious way.

Having the vaccine in Canada is wonderful news. However, it will be months before we start to see widespread inoculation. Until that time, we must practice physical distancing, wear a mask properly, and clean our hands at every opportunity.

We have the power to control the transmission of this virus – but only if we collectively commit to being safe at all times.

Sincerely,

Dr. Johan Viljoen
Chief of Staff, Executive Vice President of Medical Affairs