

Queensway Carleton Hospital faces capacity overload and asks for community support

OTTAWA – February 23, 2018

With 20 admitted patients waiting in Emergency for a bed, and all in-patient care space already filled beyond capacity, Queensway Carleton Hospital has declared an internal Code Orange.

An internal Code Orange is a protocol put in place when the hospital has used all of its beds and all of its “surge” capacity and needs additional measures in place to ensure safe, quality care. This is the second time in its history that QCH has used the internal Code Orange protocol. The first was in January of this year.

The hospital is asking for the community’s support this weekend -- by saving the Emergency department for emergencies. Last Sunday, the QCH emergency room saw 272 patients, almost an all-time record. Over the last week, Emergency volumes have remained unusually high for this time of year. QCH is asking families who come to Emergency to prepare for longer-than-usual waits or to explore whether they have alternative care options, such as walk-in clinics.

Why is there a capacity challenge?

There are two factors that are certainly having an impact. First, QCH has seen an unusually high number of admissions for influenza this year – over 90 already. Secondly, we currently have an unusually high number of ALC patients – those requiring “alternative levels of care”. While they do not need to be in an acute care hospital, they are not well enough to return “home”, and there is a long wait for a bed in a long-term care facility. On average, there are 38 ALC patients at QCH who could have been safely and appropriately cared for in an alternate setting. Today there are 56, which is 21% of the hospital’s bed capacity.

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