

# ourpulse

## Safe and Excellent Hospital Care, Closer to Home

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

We are proud to share the Yukon Hospital Corporation's Year in Review for April 2016 to March 2017. This is one of the ways we report back to the communities we serve on the achievements and challenges of the past year.

#### Here are some highlights:

- Completing construction of WGH expansion on time and on budget
- Improving care for seniors through creation of new Elder Care Unit at WGH
- Launching Canada's first hospital volunteer program North of 60
- Sharing knowledge about the role of food in healing and incorporating locally grown and traditional foods into patient care
- Increasing integration of our hospital system, so our patients continue to receive a high standard of care regardless of location
- Enhancing cancer care with more supports available in hospital
- Developing and sharing innovative approach to frostbite treatment
- Leading best practice in Canada with our First Nations Health Programs
- Using new technologies to support quicker diagnosis and increase safety
- Working collaboratively with system partners to ensure Yukoners receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.



Our team works within and between our hospitals and with other practitioners and agencies across the health system to ensure patients get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Read the full 2016/17 Year in Review report at [yukonhospitals.ca/publications](http://yukonhospitals.ca/publications)

## WGH Expansion construction complete

### HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL STAFF NOW GETTING READY FOR OPENING IN EARLY 2018

Construction of a two-story, state-of-the-art expansion to Whitehorse General Hospital has finished on schedule with the facility's new emergency department remaining on track to see its first patients early next year.

With the 40,000 square-foot building now complete, the hospital team has already turned its attention to getting ready to provide care in the new space when doors officially open in January 2018. "In the lead-up to the new emergency department's public opening, there will be several months of training,

testing and other preparations," says Jason Bilsky, Yukon Hospitals' CEO. "In emergency situations, time is critical, so these activities give our hospital and medical staff an opportunity to set up and use new equipment and systems as well as hold practice drills and conduct run-throughs. Our goal is to get everyone familiar with and comfortable in the new space in order to provide the best care possible on day one."

*Yukoners will have the opportunity to meet our team and see the new emergency department, when public tours are held in December.*

"Thank you to our entire team who, along with PCL Constructors Westcoast Inc., kept the project on schedule and on budget," adds Bilsky. "A large part of this success is due to community involvement and support, which includes nearly 100 Yukon-based

Inside the new emergency department



New, two-story expansion to Whitehorse General Hospital

businesses and specialized trades who ensured this new facility was quality built. Everyone's commitment and dedication is reflected in this incredible facility."

Construction on this latest phase of expansion began in June 2015. The new hospital wing not only features improved emergency care, but also a new critical care unit, shelved space on the second floor for future use, a data centre for advanced information systems that support patient care, as well as

upgrades to hospital power and mechanical systems. Planning is underway on how to best use the shelved space in the expansion as well as the soon-to-be vacated space in the existing hospital.

The \$72-million project is funded by Yukon Government and represents the first major enhancement to WGH in nearly two decades.

Read more on page 4.



# Ensuring a hospital bed or service is available when you need it

**HOW YUKON'S HOSPITALS MAINTAIN ACCESS TO CARE WHEN VOLUME EXCEEDS CAPACITY**

**Each day, Yukoners come to and are admitted to hospital due to illness or injury. Their expectation is that if they need a hospital bed or service, it will be available to them.**

For most, and in the vast majority of cases, this is a reality. They will be admitted to a bed, and that is where they will receive most of their care and treatment. But our hospitals are busy, particularly Whitehorse General Hospital, which, as Yukon's primary acute care centre, operates most times near or over capacity.

Last year, average occupancy at WGH was 96 per cent. This means that half the time we did not have a bed to meet the need. With that in mind, we are taking steps to ensure all patients continue to access and receive the safe excellent hospital care they need.

## Finding the right space for you at WGH

When WGH is full, it might mean that incoming patients spend more time in the emergency department or a room/space that is not intended for longer stays. This is never ideal, but our staff are working hard to provide great care and move you to a more appropriate room when it becomes available. The hospital did create three 'holding beds' to provide a more private space for patients awaiting admission rather than spending more time in emergency. These are not

formal hospital beds meant for longer stays, but the room does have what you need to provide a safer, more comfortable environment to begin the healing process. In both cases, patients awaiting admission are cared for with the necessary staff and equipment.

We are even looking for simple solutions to help. Various WGH departments came up with a collaborative plan to replace equipment carts with wall-mounted racks to hold protective masks, gloves and gowns used by health providers. This allows critical supplies to be easily accessible and reduces equipment in the hospital's hallways, helping staff to work more efficiently and safely.

## Using all hospital system beds and resources to full potential

Yukon is fortunate to have three modern, well-equipped hospitals. Each has a team of skilled and talented health providers. Because we need to provide acute care and hospital-based services to those who need it, when you come to hospital, you may be cared for at any one of these facilities and will receive exceptional care.

And, as a publicly funded organization that is accountable to provide a high level of care, we have an obligation to use all of our hospital beds and other resources to their fullest potential in order to ensure you get the care that you need.

This means, from time to time, some patients may be moved from Whitehorse to one of our community hospitals in Dawson City

or Watson Lake. We identify patients who can be cared for in these communities based on standardized clinical criteria and discussion with the physician responsible for your care. We will also speak with you about your thoughts or concerns. Moving patients to another hospital bed in the territory allows us to use our resources in the best way possible, ensures you are well cared for at all times, and reduces capacity pressures. This allows people who need an acute care bed or service only available in Whitehorse to receive this care in a more timely and safe manner.

We acknowledge this move within Yukon's hospital system and to a facility outside of Whitehorse can be stressful and difficult for many patients and families. The transfer is only for a temporary period of time, and is only done if it is safe and appropriate. We do our best to consider all circumstances and provide information to make the transfer easier.

## Working with our partners

One of the reasons we are experiencing overcapacity at WGH is because some of our patients are waiting for care in another facility such as long-term care. While they are not acutely sick and do not require a hospital service, they may not be able to thrive without additional supports.

WGH and Yukon's Department of Health and Social Services have been working together to look at how best to help these individuals, who are often frail

and elderly, and develop ways to ensure they receive the appropriate care. Home Care has increased capacity to help some WGH patients return home, with additional supports and services such as overnight care.

Working with partners such as Home Care, we are also looking at ways to ensure they have the right care and services in place without being admitted to hospital when hospital care is not required

## Improving discharge planning

We are also working with our partners to review and improve the way we discharge patients from hospital. Discharge is a process we undertake, so that our team understands what your health needs are and can put the right supports in place for you to safely return home or move to another facility.

Moving from hospital to either continuing care or home care in a timely, safe and compassionate way can be a complex process. It requires a detailed plan with input from multiple providers (physicians, nurses, social workers, physiotherapists and others), to ensure your well-being and prevent unnecessary readmission to hospital.

This approach is also helping to forge stronger collaboration within the health system and the communities we serve.



Andrew Lattelle  
Watson Lake Community Hospital



Mike Jones  
Dawson City Community Hospital

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Yukoners help shape **the future of hospital care**

**I'm a long-time Yukoner, who is passionate about this territory and its people. During my short time as Chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, I have learned so much about the critical role the hospitals play in Yukon's health system and have seen firsthand the important work our team does.**

I have also learned that our hospital operations are very sophisticated and complex. There is no down time as we are open 24/7 and constantly caring for patients in critical moments. We work to ensure we always have the right clinical staff, systems and supplies in the right place at the right time. While at the same time, we also have look to the future to understand and prepare for the challenges ahead of us.

During the past year, we completed construction on WGH expansion and are now getting ready to open an incredible new emergency department in January 2018. We have also continued to manage growing volumes and bed pressures in our hospitals, particularly in Whitehorse. To put it in perspective, WGH saw nearly 34,000 emergency visits with Dawson City and Watson Lake community hospitals seeing 3,100 and 2,400 respectively – this is the equivalent of every Yukoner visiting one of these ERs at least once last year alone. In addition, WGH's occupancy ranged between 95-115% when ideal hospital occupancy should be 75% to give us room to manage the care of incoming acute patients. We have worked internally and with other system partners to maintain quality care and ensure you have hospital care when you need it.

Despite this pressure, we have only postponed seven surgeries this year due to occupancy. A deferred surgery is never taken lightly, but is done to ensure safe patient care. We've also been able to maintain reasonable wait

times for diagnostic scans and tests as well as emergency department visits. And, Yukoners continue to speak highly of the care they receive.

Our territory is a vibrant and inspiring place to live in and care for. The Yukon's diverse customs, cultures, experiences and communities shape who we are as an organization and health care team. This makes equity, partnership and reconciliation important to us. With these ideas in mind, we have explored ways to further strengthen and integrate our hospital system in service to you.

Our team looked at local, national and international trends in health care. We also had the opportunity to listen to and speak with individual Yukoners, hospital staff and system partners, including physicians, First Nations communities, health agencies and community organizations.

As a result, we have introduced our Strategic Plan 2018-2022, which will guide the Yukon Hospital Corporation through the next five years. I am pleased so many Yukoners actively participated in the process and took time to share their thoughts with us. This inclusive approach helped us arrive at a plan which focuses on four key directions:

1. Provide excellent patient care
2. Cultivate an environment of passionate and engaged people
3. Collaborate with health system partners
4. Build robust and sustainable systems that advance and support care.

The Board of Trustees was able to set clear achievable goals within each of these four areas and develop a new vision that will guide our work – A journey together. The best care every time.

In order to reach this vision, our work in the coming months will focus on putting this plan into action. We recognize that strategic plans are high-level roadmaps, so this means we will work with hospital and medical staff as well as system partners to identify and initiate activities, and develop specific measurable outcomes.

What do the next five years have in store for Yukon's hospitals? At WGH, we will continue planning for the next phases of hospital development to use vacated and shelved space created by our expansion to meet with the territory's highest priority needs. We will leverage technology to enhance patient care. We will look to further integrate our community hospitals and utilize all beds and resources within the hospital system to ensure you have the care that you need.

We will look to advance concepts such as health equity – by removing barriers to care and creating culturally safe environments. We will strive for continuous system collaboration and increased alignment with our partners to ensure a seamless and safe health journey for Yukoners.

We look forward to working with all of you to get there together and ensure the best possible care every time.



**Brian Gillen, Chair**  
Board of Trustees  
Yukon Hospital Corporation

WHAT IS **FRAILTY?**

Frailty is often related to aging, although it can also occur in younger people. It is a term that means that multiple body systems gradually lose their in-built reserves.

A frail person is vulnerable to sudden deterioration in health triggered by seemingly small events such as minor infection, a fall, or a change in medication. Mild frailty can mean that people can self-manage with some support, while advanced frailty means people likely need 24/7 care in, a longer-term care facility.

## Volunteer at the hospital

Our new volunteer program at WGH already boasts nearly 50 volunteers. They greet patients and visitors, provide general information, and offer companionship and comfort, including serving coffee from our new volunteer warm beverage cart. Right now, the hospital has the following volunteer opportunities:

- Friendly Visitor in WGH Elder Care Unit
- Friendly Visitor in WGH Surgical Unit
- Comfort Care Support in Karen's Room (cancer care)
- Information Desk/Way finding support



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To learn more, go to [yukonhospitals.ca/volunteer](http://yukonhospitals.ca/volunteer) or email [volunteer@wgh.yk.ca](mailto:volunteer@wgh.yk.ca) or call 393-8673.

## WGH Expansion *(continued from page 1)*

### What does the expansion mean for Yukoners?

- A modern critical care observation unit located within emergency department
- A facility designed to meet high standards in patient safety and comfort, security and infection control
  - ✓ Minimizing the spread of infection
  - ✓ Improving visibility between hospital staff and patients
  - ✓ Improving privacy
- Enhanced hospital care through improved patient flow and safety
  - ✓ Ensuring triage personnel are the first point of contact in the emergency department, providing more direct access to care
  - ✓ Creating more direct access to the emergency department
  - ✓ Increasing our capacity to meet a wide range and volume of needs
- Expanded diagnostic services with the addition of MRI
- Enhanced work environment for physicians, nurses and other hospital staff

- Improvements in the hospital's infrastructure and systems along with a new data centre to provide information systems and support technology for patient care

### WGH expansion construction is complete. What's next?

A lot of planning and preparation goes into being ready. Our focus is now on ensuring we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time with the right equipment/technology and the right policies and procedures in place so we can provide outstanding care on day one, when our new emergency department/critical care unit opens in January 2018:

- ✓ Finalize new systems, processes and flows
- ✓ Move in furniture, equipment and supplies
- ✓ Test new equipment, systems, processes and flows
- ✓ Provide training on new processes and equipment, conduct mock run-throughs
- ✓ Offer tours to employees and the public to become more familiar and comfortable with the new space

*Back of the new Emergency Department, including the new ambulance entrance*



## FLU SEASON

It's that time again – flu season. It can be a miserable time of year and means your doctor's office, health centre and hospital can be busier than usual. Here are some simple steps you can take to stay healthy and avoid having to seek medical attention.

- **Get a flu shot.** The easiest, safest and most effective way to protect yourself and others around you is to get a flu shot every year. Yukon provides free flu shots to all Yukoners. A full list of immunization clinics across the territory can be found at [www.yukonimmunization.ca](http://www.yukonimmunization.ca).
- **Practice good respiratory hygiene** by coughing or sneezing into your elbow or tissue – and remember to put the tissue in the garbage right away.
- **Clean your hands often and well** – and make it part of your regular routine. Alcohol-based hand rub works best when hands are not visibly soiled and soap/water is not available. Remember to clean your hands when coming/going from the hospital and entering/leaving a patient room.

The flu is a serious infection in your lungs caused by different viruses. It is highly contagious and can be spread through coughing and sneezing as well as touching contaminated surfaces.

The most common symptoms of the flu are chills, fever, sore throat, muscle pains, headache, coughing and fatigue. The flu is not the common cold. It doesn't cause stomach pain, diarrhea or vomiting – although some children may experience nausea or vomiting. These may be signs of what is commonly called the "stomach flu" or a gastrointestinal infection.

Most healthy people recover from influenza in a week to ten days. People with chronic diseases, children, infants and people over 65 can be hit hard by influenza and suffer severe complications, like pneumonia.

## QUICK FACTS *(for the year ending March 31, 2017)*

	Whitehorse General Hospital	Dawson City Community Hospital	Watson Lake Community Hospital
Staff	503	25	29
Admissions	3,365	83	81
Patient Days	20,181	955	698
Patient Stays greater than 30 days	5,936	–	–
Emergency Visits	32,995	3,132	2,419
Imaging Visits	35,002	496	502
MRI Scans	2,132	–	–
Lab Visits	28,847	2,110	1,622
Chemotherapy Visits	818	–	–
Specialist Visits	8,753	–	–
Therapies Visits	5,913	–	–
Surgeries (same-day & inpatient)	2,605	–	–
Births	408	–	–



- We are seeing a **high and growing demand** for hospital services.
- At Whitehorse General Hospital, the average occupancy is **96 %**. More than half the time the hospital doesn't have beds to meet demand.
- We are **maintaining reasonable wait times** for diagnostic scans and tests as well as emergency department visits.
- We have the opportunity to **better utilize beds in all three hospitals** to meet the need for accessible, quality and timely care.

## Faster turnaround time for lab test results

**Waiting for test results can be stressful for patients, so working with the eHealth Yukon initiative, we have taken steps to improve the way we process lab orders and results.**

Earlier this year, the very first lab orders and results for cancer screening and respiratory tests were processed and transferred electronically between the BC Centre for Disease Control and Whitehorse General Hospital. A few months later, the WGH lab also began to electronically order and receive results for serology

screening tests (which look for antibodies in your blood). These advancements represent the first inter-jurisdictional electronic transfer of health information in Canada.

These lab orders and results now flow directly from the BC lab into our hospitals' main information system and then to physicians. This reduces the time for patients to receive results, allows staff to monitor trends more easily, and enhances patient safety with less room for clerical errors.



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## WHAT TO BRING WHEN COMING TO HOSPITAL?

Whether you're visiting a friend or family member or coming to hospital to have surgery, a test or scan, or seek emergency care, you may not know what to expect or what to bring with you.

We have put together some helpful tips to put your mind at ease. You'll find a wide range of information about visiting, staying or coming to emergency, in both English and French, on our website at [yukonhospitals.ca](http://yukonhospitals.ca).

Here's what you'll find:

- Where to register and find the service you're looking for
- What to bring with you (such as health card, medications and personal items for longer stays, etc.)
- When meals are served and where to get snacks
- What is provided in patient rooms, including phone and TV
- How to prepare for surgery
- Where to park
- What First Nations Health Programs we provide and how to access its services

These are just a few examples of the resources we provide online. We're doing our best to help you know what to expect when coming to hospital. When you are prepared, it also helps our team ensure your hospital stay is as comfortable as possible.

## Working with our partners to reduce potential harm

### NALOXONE KITS MADE AVAILABLE TO AT-RISK PATIENTS

**Naloxone is a safe drug that temporarily reverses the effects of overdoses caused by opioids such as heroin, morphine and fentanyl.**

Yukon's three hospitals have joined together with the Yukon government and other community and public health organizations to make naloxone kits available at no cost, along with training on how to use them.

The kits, available to registered patients through hospital emergency departments or on a drop-in basis through WGH's First Nations Health Program office, include a small dose of naloxone along with gloves and syringes to allow people to self-administer the drug when needed. This provides some more time to get emergency medical help. This initiative has been implemented as part of territory-wide efforts to save lives and reduce injury from drug overdoses.



Submitted photos

Make your visit a positive experience



Everything you need to know starts at [yukonhospitals.ca](http://yukonhospitals.ca)

Visiting hours • Where to go  
What to expect • What to bring  
Career opportunities and other useful information