Humber River Hospital

Submitted by Dr. K. Sonu Gaind, Chief of Psychiatry / Medical Director of Mental Health

The past year, 2020, marked five years since Humber River Hospital’s (HRH) transition from its three legacy sites to our new “high tech” facility near Keele and 401. Our program has continued to grow, so much so that the Mental Health program’s initially spacious seeming 120,000 square feet across the hospital’s north and south 5th floors is starting to feel cramped! In addition to expanding and revising psychiatric services, we have continued to build and integrate patient services with allied mental health professionals, including a new nurse practitioner clinic, and enhanced support of urgent, emergency, inpatient and child and adolescent psychiatry. As all services in the province needed to react to COVID waves and restrictions, the HRH Mental Health program nimbly adopted elements of virtual and video care, while maintaining necessary on-site services as appropriate to minimize gaps in care. In June, the hospital navigated a ‘code grey’ where computer services were deliberately shut down for a period of time to allow safe rebuilding of systems following an attempted serious cyberattack. Due to remarkably quick response of our IT team within half an hour of the attempted incursion (around 2 AM on a Monday morning!), personal health information was not compromised, but the experience reminded us of the vulnerability digital systems face to such criminal and cyberterror attacks, and of the need for robust backup and downtime procedures.

As we continue to offer elective and selective post-graduate trainee experiences, we also look forward to the Department of Family Medicine core residents doing mental health rotations with our Mental Health program from 2022 onwards. Psychiatrists in the HRH Mental Health program are increasingly working with the U of T Department of Psychiatry, including in leadership roles at SAC, post-graduate medical education, and various Divisions, and working on QI projects and building skills including through the C-QuIPS Patient Safety and Quality Improvement course. This past year the hospital added two new positions for Research Chairs, and our Mental Health program will be working especially with our new Research Chair for Community Connections on initiatives examining issues related to long term COVID impacts on marginalized and racialized populations, and access issues and mental health needs of the elderly.

For much of 2020 our Mental Health program worked with a project management team to develop a plan for modernizing and revising our outpatient model of care. We have started implementation of our new stepped care model, which includes measurement based care, and look forward to completing our transition to our new model in the coming year.