

## **Service Planning and Clinical Services Expansion during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Corporate statement for inclusion in program response guidelines, policies and treatment considerations*

*Current as of June 8, 2020*

### **LHSC Update and Guidance**

The pandemic situation keeps evolving in Ontario. London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) continues to take actions to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and protect our staff, physicians, patients, families, caregivers and visitors.

Based on government directives, LHSC began implementing service reductions on March 16, 2020 in an effort to preserve clinical capacity to respond to an increase in patients with COVID-19.

Starting in June 2020, LHSC is moving forward with an initial plan to gradually and carefully expand some clinical services that were paused during the pandemic, with prioritization based on clinical evidence and need. This follows the [recent amendment to the Ministry of Health's Directive #2](#), with regional approval of the hospital's plan by Ontario Health West and support from the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

This is not business as usual. It is important that we strike a balance between slowly expanding scheduled care and continuing to be ready for whatever COVID-19 might throw our way. Physician and administrative leaders are monitoring the situation closely and working in partnership to manage the gradual expansion of services while maintaining capacity for any surge in COVID-19 patients.

As part of the gradual reintroduction of services, all health-care providers including LHSC must comply with [operational requirements](#) and follow key principles outlined in the [Ontario Health framework](#). This includes an ethical prioritization of patient care while carefully considering criteria such as adequate human resources; supplies of Personal Protective Equipment and necessary medications; diagnostic and lab testing

capacity; and, critical care beds and support. LHSC is also working closely with home and community care as well as primary care services.

The constraints that hospitals face are significant. We will continue to monitor our care volumes and quality of care on a weekly basis, and adjust expansion plans as needed. This will involve testing, modeling and evaluating the impact of service expansion as we proceed, taking a gradual and measured approach.

Ultimately, clinical decision-making for specific patient populations and individual patient cases rests within each medical department, as long as it considers institutional constraints. A multi-disciplinary approach should be taken to best care for our patients and prioritize services.

Treatment decisions should be carefully reviewed by a patient's health-care team who will continue to monitor their care closely. The health and safety of patients remains our top priority. Referrals to guidelines and consultations with professional practice associations such as the CMPA or OMA are strongly encouraged.

When managing a pandemic situation, decisions at every level are to be made in the most ethical manner possible, following established principles and frameworks. See the [LHSC COVID-19 Ethics Framework](#). [LHSC's core values](#) of compassion, teamwork, curiosity and accountability continue to guide daily decision-making. Hospitals in Ontario are following processes for clinical services expansion that must be fair for all patients and guided by the four foundational principles of proportionality, minimizing harm to patients, equity and reciprocity.

LHSC will continue to work with our regional partners to keep safety at the heart of our developing strategy to expand services as soon as we can. Hospitals are safe and remain open for urgent and emergency care. LHSC continues to provide compassionate care for the most medically complex and critically ill patients in the region.

Any questions or concerns should be directed to LHSC's executive leadership team.

Visit LHSC's internal [COVID-19 \(Novel Coronavirus\) website](#) for the latest updates about service changes, including communication resources. Public updates for the community can be found [here](#).