

Hamilton Health Sciences 2021-22 Community Report: Looking Back, Leaping Forward

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A message from our leaders

[Watch the message from our leaders](#)

In many ways, hospitals have been at the epicenter of the pandemic. More than two years since it began, our patients teams and operations continue to experience its impact. More often than not during the last two years, we have faced significant staffing shortages, record high bed occupancy rates, and deferrals to care. All of this has shone a very bright light on the need for continued investment in healthcare. We need facilities designed to meet today's infection control standards, tools and technology that improve how we provide care, and programs aimed at developing and retaining skilled health care workers for the long term.

Looking back on the year, we've made impressive progress on many of these fronts despite the relentless pressures on our system. Our two-year journey to renew our aging hospital information system culminated on June 4th when we went live with Epic. We now have every patient's medical record in one place, thousands of new digital devices to help us access those records at the bedside, and new ways of working that improve patient safety.

Early this year, we celebrated several major milestones in our hospital redevelopment plans. We received the green light from the provincial government to proceed with planning for the

redevelopment of the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Center to increase patient capacity and rebuild very old clinical spaces that are no longer acceptable by today's care standards. We've also received funding to make major improvements to the emergency department at our Hamilton General Hospital site which is an essential part of one of the busiest trauma centers in Ontario. And we broke ground at our West Lincoln Memorial Hospital site where a brand new hospital will be built to serve the growing population of West Niagara. None of this work would be possible or worthwhile without the thousands of staff and physicians who provide care here every day. Without them, our tools and buildings amount to nothing.

The future of our hospitals depends on a strong, sustainable workforce. Accordingly, workforce planning is a big priority for us in the year ahead as we develop new and innovative strategies to attract, train and retain skilled healthcare providers. We've also made great strides in our work to improve equity, diversity and inclusion for everyone who walks through our doors: patients, staff, physicians and volunteers. We want HHS to be a place where people are proud to work, where they feel included and valued and where they can build a lifelong career. To everyone who learns, works and volunteers at Hamilton Health Sciences, thank you. We have a lot of work ahead of us and like most hospitals in Ontario, we're still burdened by the stubborn persistence of the COVID-19 virus in our community. But the future looks brighter than it has for a long time.

We're heading towards a brighter future

More than two years later, we continue to experience the impacts of the pandemic, but we've made impressive progress advancing other priorities despite the relentless pressures on our system. Our two-year journey to renew our aging hospital information system culminated on June 4 when we went live with Epic. Plus, we've made great strides in our work to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion for everyone who walks through our doors. Watch our videos to see what we've been up to.

Video: COVID-19

[Watch the video about how our teams navigated COVID-19](#)

We thought it would pass in months, but a year later the grip of COVID-19 was as strong as ever. We had no choice but to push forward and so we did. The result: a lot of struggle but also a lot of innovation that will carry with us into the future. Virtual appointments once a long-term goal became everyday practice as we work to reserve hospital space for COVID and emergency care and protect our patients from the spread of the virus. Expanding on the success of virtual appointments, we made it easier for patients to connect with their care team after surgery from the comfort of their home and through the simple touch of a screen. As Omicron took hold of our community, our teams mobilized to respond to incredible staffing shortages and ensure that the sickest patients continued to get the care they needed.

We are nothing without our people. True to our vision of providing the best care for all, our teams fought against exhaustion and relentless waves of COVID to serve their community. Whether it was converting areas of the hospital into temporary intensive care units for the sickest COVID patients, building a mobile health unit to add bed capacity to our health care system, ensuring we had adequate PPE to protect our colleagues and patients, working with partners to increase capacity at Hamilton's COVID-19 testing and assessment centers in an attempt to minimize the spread of infection within the

community, providing evidence-based information on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines to break down barriers that led to misunderstanding and vaccine hesitancy, or being first in line to receive and administer the COVID-19 vaccine, our teams have worked hard to make hope a reality during difficult days. We've done our best to protect our people, just as they've done their best to protect our patients. Still, all the PPE in the world could not guard against the deep struggle that healthcare workers have faced throughout the pandemic. Our job moving forward is to support one another through recovery and to rebuild a fragile healthcare workforce.

We are proud of what we've accomplished throughout the past and we are grateful to our team of dedicated staff and physicians for their expertise and commitment. Their steadfast efforts and dual focus on patient care and safety for all have kept our hospitals running. As we look to the future. We are certain that the programs and practices we have developed during these trying times will sustain healthcare delivery beyond the pandemic.

Video: Epic

[Watch the video on our new hospital information system, Epic](#)

We have been waiting for this moment for a very long time. We always knew that digital healthcare was the future. Renewing our aging system would mean providing better care for patients for years to come. The alternative was never really an option. Becoming an Epic hospital is by far the most exciting and transformative project that Hamilton Health Sciences has ever seen. It's also the largest, so it was an all hands on deck approach from the beginning.

Step one in our journey was to build the Epic system everyone at Hamilton Health Sciences would one day use. This year-long process included staff, doctors and leaders from across the hospital. We even consulted with patients and families to ensure their voices were reflected in the system that would eventually support their care. We were able to stand on the shoulders of other Canadian Epic hospitals to learn from their experiences as we embarked on our own journey. It was an absolutely massive undertaking especially as we simultaneously responded to the global pandemic but we knew we needed to push forward. There were lots of late nights and early mornings and the closer we got to go live the more we felt the pressure.

You could just feel the energy in the hospital changing, there was a nervous excitement. It was starting to become real. This is finally happening. Epic stopped being something we just talked about in the future tense as we became more and more hands-on with the new system. Over 9000 new devices were deployed hospital-wide. We now had new, modern tools to help our people to do their very best work.

With the infrastructure in place, we now had to learn the system. Thousands of staff and physicians collectively logged tens of thousands of training hours. Together, we were starting to learn how Epic would change the way we work for the better. Many eager folks stepped forward to be super users and trainers to help their colleagues learn the new system and support them during those first few weeks after go-live. As we rounded the corner to the final 30 days, we started to feel ready. Let's get to go-live and let's start using the system.

June 4th 2022, the day we had all been working towards for two years, was finally here. I couldn't sleep. I'll never forget what it was like to be in the command center in the hours and minutes leading up to the

moment when we flipped the switch and became an Epic hospital. It happened in the middle of the night to minimize disruption to patient care. While many of our patients slept, hundreds of staff and physicians were making Epic come to life at HHS. In an instant, we had a single source of truth for all patient information. We were Epic.

Go live is really just the beginning. Now that we're an Epic hospital, there's just so much more we'll be able to do. We are now a hospital that empowers patients to be the owners of their health records and to participate fully in their care. That's something I'm really proud of. We'll have more information at our fingertips so we can make even better informed decisions with our patients. We're also a world-renowned academic center and the data capabilities within Epic are going to skyrocket our capacity for life-changing research.

HHS has always been a destination for health care excellence but now that we're on a digital system, we're going to be able to attract even more of the best and brightest in health care. It's been an incredible journey so far, one I'll never forget. There's no way we could have reached this point without the 15,000 staff and physicians across our hospital. We did this together. Thank you.

Video: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

[Watch the video on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Hamilton Health Sciences is a top performing hospital and we want our focus on equity, diversity and inclusion to be part of our distinction, but we're not there yet and our work continues.

Looking back, HHS has implemented several initiatives related to diversity and inclusiveness such as Indigenous Signs of Welcome, the Pat Mandy Inclusion Award and a Gender Identity and Gender Expression policy. We've also designed some specific programs and spaces for patients and families. This past year with support from the President's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council, we gathered input from our leaders, our workforce and partners. We're grateful to everyone who participated in the surveys, the interviews and focus groups and shared their lived experiences. These voices are shaping HHS' future plans and will help us move from ideas to action.

Looking ahead, it's clear that the culture at an organization as big as ours won't change overnight. But we're continuing to take steps to create a more welcoming and inclusive HHS. In collaboration with partners, we signed the Hamilton Charter for Promoting Gender Equity in Healthcare. We have created new leadership positions focused on equity, diversity and inclusion to bring additional expertise and focus to our work. Education and support continues to be provided for our workforce through multimedia resources, workshops and training. We also learn about each other's beliefs and cultures through sharing stories. And our new hospital information system will improve the patient experience by enabling them to share information such as their pronouns and race.

Providing safe care and a welcoming environment isn't about one person or one team, it's about all of us supporting patients, their families and one another. We're so grateful to everyone who's contributed to our journey so far and we look forward to working together to foster an inclusive HHS for all.

Looking back at all we have accomplished

Though many of our efforts were focused on recovering from the pandemic, we're proud to have accomplished many milestones in other areas of our organization. Drag the timeline or use the arrows to scroll through our milestones.

Our Milestones

- Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) benefits from enhancements and expansion of [nurse extern program](#), supporting health human resources. Read.
- Study shows [wait times](#) effectively reduced and efficiency increased in emergency departments.
- HHS is the first hospital in Canada to introduce [new radiation therapy machines](#) that deliver treatment four times faster.
- Newsweek ranks McMaster Children's Hospital (MCH) as one of the [best children's hospitals in the world](#).
- HHS designated a [Choosing Wisely hospital](#).
- MCH part of \$8 million [government investment](#) to treat eating disorders.
- HHS wins two Trillium Gift of Life awards.
- HHS [turns 25](#).
- HHS receives [top employer award](#).
- HHS receives "game-changing" investment to integrate [internationally-trained nurses](#).
- HHS and partners jointly signed the [Hamilton Charter for Promoting Gender Equity in Health Care](#).
- Ontario Government [invests \\$20M to support redevelopment](#) planning of Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre and the expansion of Hamilton General Hospital's emergency department.
- West Lincoln Memorial Hospital begins [construction on new hospital](#).
- [Volunteers return](#) to in-person roles at hospital sites.
- Best-in-class [electronic health records system launches](#) at HHS, the single largest clinical transformation in our history.
- Sustainable Hamilton Burlington honours HHS with 2 awards.
- 500 patients sign-up to new patient portal, MyChart, in the first two weeks since launching.

Top Stories

Our people are at the heart of what we do.

- "This third wave is hitting us hard as we're seeing younger, sicker patients come in every day," says Bianca Llanora, registered nurse in Juravinski Hospital's [intensive care unit](#). "I feel fortunate to work with a great team who supports me and helps me cope through these difficult shifts."
- The caregivers looking after [patients on ECMO](#) are some of the most specialized healthcare professionals," says Paul Hunter, a charge perfusionist in the intensive care unit at the Hamilton General Hospital, "and we are working tirelessly all hours of a day to save the lives of these patients so they can recover and return home to their families."

- “Run and ride horses” is what 8-year-old Isabella Cuartas was looking forward to most after her surgery at McMaster Children’s Hospital to receive a [new magnetic rod to treat her scoliosis](#), resulting in fewer back surgeries during the course of her youth.
- “It felt like my heart was quitting on me,” says 85-year-old Richard Hayhurst. “Sometimes, I could count to four between heartbeats.” Since getting [a TAVI procedure as well as a pacemaker](#), Hayhurst can now enjoy maintaining his garden.
- Anoop Chugh was one of Hamilton Health Sciences’ (HHS) first very [sick COVID-19 patients](#) to “make it.” “There were so many people who devoted themselves to making sure that I lived,” he says. “I can’t thank them enough.”
- “I chose HHS due to the diversity of opportunities and areas open during the earlier years of my career,” says [registered nurse](#) and clinical manager, Nick Millar. “I think of the patients and the staff that I support and this motivates me to do better.”
- “I felt like my fitness had gone backwards. Things that had always been easy for me, like going upstairs and gardening, became harder,” says Joanne Weeks, who was one of the first participants to register for the [virtual GERAS DANCE classes](#) during the pandemic.
- “The [Surgeon of the Week program](#) means that patients from West Niagara can receive high-quality surgical care close to home,” says Dr. Ved Tandan, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital's (WLMH) site chief of surgery. As part of the program, surgeons from HHS' two largest hospitals travel to Grimsby on a regular basis, bringing their specialized surgical skills and expertise to patients at WLMH.
- “Even though we’ve never met, we’re part of the HHS family. I just know it’s the right thing to do,” says Hollie Spencer, who [donated her kidney to a colleague](#) who also works at McMaster University Medical Centre.
- “I met new people from other areas throughout HHS, made new friends and I feel more in touch with the whole organization,” says Lily Vetzal, one of the hundreds of [HHS staff deployed to where they were most needed](#) during the latest Omicron wave. “Helping with the staffing shortages is a real eye-opener.”
- “Early in the pandemic, I remember being on a phone call at 11 o’clock on a Friday night trying to negotiate one million N95 masks,” recalls Robin Simons, HHS’ [procurement and supply chain](#) director.
- Seven-year-old Evelyn Wong and her younger sister Janelle experienced debilitating seizures, which drastically improved since the [HHS PReSS team was able to procure special medication](#) unavailable in Canada. “The impact of this new medication has been profound,” says their mom.

Care of Patients and the Environment

From waste to greenhouse gas emissions, we recognize that our patient care services impact the health of our environment and the health of our community. Learn about the key efforts we are making to improve on our environmental stewardship in five performance areas. [View our environmental report infographic.](#)

Empowering Innovation Improving Health

HHS has a long tradition of curiosity, discovery, and willingness to think outside the box to transform health care through innovation. In collaboration with our team of health professionals, we foster the spirit of inquiry to identify problems that need solving. We forge strategic partnerships to find solutions to challenges we can't tackle alone. And, through our commitment to innovation, we're revolutionizing health care by empowering patients to partner in their own care for a more patient-centred, seamless system. See some of our recent innovation achievements in our latest Innovation Report.

Investments in our People and our Tools

The best patient care in the future will require new processes, equipment and partnerships to keep up with new technology, changing demographics and increasing patient expectations.

We have stayed the course on investments that will ensure Hamilton Health Sciences remains a high-performing hospital that delivers exceptional and safe care to the patients we serve.

- 2021/22 Investments | Over \$84M allocated to projects completed in fiscal 2022
- \$21.7 Million Medical Equipment/MES An article, instrument, apparatus or machine that is used in the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness or disease
- \$18.6 Million Computer Technology Software applications and operating systems (telephones, other telecommunications products, video equipment)
- \$18.0 Million Health & Safety Equipment and facility upgrades to ensure a safe and secure environment for staff, patients and the community
- \$13.1 Million Facilities Projects completed that maintain or enhance the performance of critical systems and infrastructure
- \$12.8 Million Covid 19 Projects completed to support the response to the Covid 19 pandemic

By the numbers

- Serving a region of 2.3M
- 162,685 emergency visits
- 312,581 virtual visits
- 400+ researchers
- 6 global research continents
- 13,000+ employees
- 10 sites
- 410,000+ patients served
- 3,919 babies born
- 1.5M saved in km/month for virtual visits
- 140+ new clinical trials per year
- 102 countries conducting our clinical trials
- 2000+ physicians
- 3,208+ COVID-10 patients cared for
- 115,652 COVID-19 tests performed in assessment centre
- 4th ranked hospital in Canada's top 40 research hospitals in 2020

- 1,600 global research sites
- \$1.7B organization
- 1,200+ volunteers

Thank you for continuing to make a vital difference.

Read the [2021 donor report](#).

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