July 6, 2020

Restrictions expanded at Misericordia to minimize transmission of COVID-19

EDMONTON – Out of an abundance of caution, the Misericordia Community Hospital is now under a series of progressive outbreak restrictions due to increasing numbers of positive COVID-19 cases within the hospital.

As of this morning, there are 18 patients at the hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19 in relation to this outbreak. In addition, 14 staff members have tested positive. Eight new cases were identified over the weekend (seven patients, one staff member).

Two patients linked to this outbreak have passed away, and our sympathies are with their family members and loved ones at this difficult time.

In order to reduce the risk of further transmission of COVID-19, the Misericordia Community Hospital is now closed to new admissions and transfers for surgical and medicine patients.

EMS will take patients to other hospitals in the Edmonton Zone, with the exception of emergencies where the hospital is the nearest acute care site. At this time, women in labour may still continue with their birth plan where the Misericordia was the planned site.

Surgical capacity will be restricted to day surgery for now. Overnight surgeries will be postponed or completed at another site in the Edmonton Zone. The Edmonton Zone continues to meet the needs of patients who need urgent, emergent and oncology surgeries.

Patients who have tested positive are being cared for together on three units, including the hospital's designated COVID-19 unit, however eight units are now included in the outbreak restrictions as a necessary precaution.

The hospital's Emergency Department remains open, and uninterrupted patient care is still being provided in Women's Health Services, including Labour and Delivery and the NICU; Addiction and Mental Health; Critical Care, including Intensive Care and Cardiac Care; Hyperbaric Oxygen; and, the Institute for Reconstructive Sciences and Medicine.

Patients should be reassured that the Misericordia is safe for patients.

"We are taking this situation extremely seriously and have taken swift action," said Dr. David Zygun, Medical Director, AHS Edmonton Zone. "We are taking these significant measures to ensure the safety of patients, staff, physicians, and volunteers."

"AHS and Covenant Health officials have implemented aggressive outbreak protocols and are undertaking widespread testing and contact tracing of any potentially exposed patients and staff," said Dr. Marcia Johnson, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health.

"Health officials are working around the clock to prevent further spread of this virus, protect the health and well-being of patients, staff and physicians, and bring a timely and safe resolution to this outbreak."

Covenant Health is testing all patients on the affected units and is also testing all staff who have either worked on or have been present on those units even if they are not showing symptoms.

All potential contacts are being traced to reduce the possibility of spread. The site is following Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness and Public Health isolation and testing protocols.

Visitors to the affected units are being restricted at this time. We encourage families to continue to meet virtually with their loved ones.

Covenant Health continues to work with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Alberta and Alberta Health Services to ensure the hospital is safe, and are following protocols to minimize risk of spread, including:

- Thorough environmental cleaning with hospital grade disinfectants;
- Enhanced use of PPE on all medicine and surgery units;
- Ensuring proper physical distancing on units and common areas;
- Ensuring proper hand hygiene practices are being followed;
- Screening of all staff and visitors on entry to the hospital.

"We care deeply for our patients and staff. We are doing everything we can to contain transmission and keep patients and the public safe and healthy," said Dr. Owen Heisler, Chief Medical Officer, Covenant Health. "We are extremely grateful to our hard-working and dedicated physicians and staff, who are continuing to provide quality care to our patients in challenging circumstances."

Please remain vigilant, and remember:

- <u>Wash your hands often and well</u>. Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. <u>When sick, cover your cough and sneezes and then wash your hands.</u>
- Stay at home as much as possible, and practice <u>physical distancing</u> when you do leave home: keep at least 6 feet from others when going out. If it is not possible to physically distance, wear a mask.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
- Contact your primary health provider or <u>Health Link 811</u> if you have health concerns.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

Covenant Health is one of Canada's largest Catholic healthcare organizations with over 15,000 physicians, employees and volunteers serving in 12 communities across Alberta. A major provider in Alberta's integrated health system, Covenant Health works with Alberta Health Services and community partners to positively influence the health of Albertans through a broad range of programs and services. For more information visit CovenantHealth.ca.

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