

NEWS RELEASE

Friday October 30, 2020

Expanding capacity to care for patients with blood cancers

HAMILTON, ON - A newly expanded unit for patients needing treatment for blood cancers such as lymphoma and leukemia was officially opened today at Hamilton Health Sciences' Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre.

The **Ron and Nancy Clark Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapies** Unit will enhance provincial capacity for this lifesaving treatment and allow patients to receive care closer to home. It is just one of three centres in Ontario providing all forms of stem cell transplants to adult cancer patients:

- autologous (uses patient's own stem cells)
- allogeneic (stem cells from a donor)
- and the novel CAR-T Cell therapy (patient's T-Cells are modified in a lab and re-administered to the patient).

The expanded unit features:

- State-of-the-art design for a healing environment
- 15 new inpatient rooms
- 5 new outpatient bays
- Two lounge areas for family and friends, both equipped with kitchens
- Expanded outpatient area for Hematology in the Juravinski Cancer centre
- Expanded laboratory and pharmacy space

Funding for the \$25M expanded unit was provided by the Government of Ontario. An additional \$5M was raised by the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre Foundation through its Tomorrow Stems from You® campaign.

BACKGROUND

- Stem cells, the building blocks of the blood system, are used to treat many different illnesses including blood cancers such as lymphoma and leukemia. A stem cell transplant replaces a patient's diseased stem cells with a matching donor's healthy cells to help fight the cancer.
- Dr. Irwin Walker, a world leader in hematology at JHCC, performed the first successful Canadian stem cell transplant with an unrelated donor 32 years ago. Since then, the JHCC has been recognized as leader in all forms of stem cell transplantation.
- In 2020, the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre became the first hospital in Ontario to provide CAR T-cell therapy as a standard option for patients suffering from lymphoma, and the first in Canada to provide this therapy on an outpatient basis.
- In 2019-2020, JHCC performed 285 stem cell transplants, representing a nearly 106 per cent increase over the previous five years.
- The unit will start to receive patients in November.

QUOTES

Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

The newly expanded stem cell transplant unit at Hamilton Health Sciences' Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre will help ensure that patients living with cancer can access lifesaving treatments when they need it and closer to home. Congratulations to the team at Hamilton Health Sciences for making this important project a reality and thank you for your compassion and commitment to supporting patients.

Charles Criminisi, Chair, HHS Board of Directors and Chair, Tomorrow Stems From You® campaign

My brother Vince had a stem cell transplant in 2015. I know firsthand the good work that is done in the unit and how important it is to patients and their families. My sincere congratulations to all of the staff and physicians, both past and present, whose dedication and brilliance led to the development of this world-class hematology program. As campaign chair, I would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations that contributed to making the expanded unit a reality. Your generosity will change lives.

Rob MacIsaac, President and CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences

On behalf of everyone at Hamilton Health Sciences, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Government of Ontario, the Clark family and all of the donors for helping make this new patient space a reality. A special note of gratitude as well to the patients, families, staff and physicians whose input and expertise guided the planning and design of the unit. Our hematology team is second to none, and this unit will allow them to continue building on HHS' leadership in the treatment and research of blood cancers.

Dr. Ralph Meyer, Vice President of Oncology and Palliative Care at Hamilton Health Sciences' Juravinski Cancer Centre, and Regional Vice President of Cancer Care Ontario

With this new capacity, HHS staff and physicians will be able to continue to build on 50 years of pioneering treatment and research in this specialty area of care. Most importantly, patients will benefit from improved access to lifesaving therapy. We are truly grateful to the Government of Ontario for recognizing this need in our province and supporting the expertise of the Malignant Hematology team at HHS.

Donna Skelly, MPP for Flamborough-Glanbrook

Ontario's investment in the expansion of the full-service stem cell transplant program at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Care reinforces our government's commitment to life-saving treatment and stem cell transplants in this province. It also builds on the remarkable history of cancer treatment in Hamilton.

Nancy Clark, family member and donor

We are truly honoured to have this important unit named for Ron and myself. We are grateful that his memory will always live on in this unit and through the amazing work that the teams at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre passionately perform every day.



Pearl Veenema, CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation

We are so grateful to the dedicated donor community for helping us raise \$5 million through the Tomorrow Stems From You® campaign. It is their commitment to this amazing program that has enabled us to fund the equipment, patient amenities and provide the community share of the capital development costs. The Ron and Nancy Clark Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapies Unit serves as the foundation for a world-class program while providing a tremendously healing environment for patients and families.

RESOURCES – images of unit; b-roll of unit name unveiling, ribbon-cutting and tour
<https://hhsc.box.com/s/n2w1gwjv4vl85lghl6eirnbrn3jztlbv>

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