



Four Counties Health Services site

1824 Concession Drive
Newbury ON N0L 1Z0
519 693-4441

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital site

395 Carrie Street
Strathroy ON N7G 3J4
519 245-1550

www.mhalliance.on.ca

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*For more information
contact:*

MEDIA RELEASE

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Michael Mazza
Chief Executive Officer
519 245-5295 ext. 5592

Four Counties Pilots Innovative Testing

Four Counties Health Services (FCHS) is the pilot site for the Thames Valley Hospital Partnership (TVHP) Point-of-Care testing.

“Point-of-Care is the gold standard for all critical areas requiring immediate results,” Thea Turpin, Lab Manager for Middlesex Hospital Alliance’s Laboratories, says. “Other small hospitals are looking at this system to improve critical care access to common lab tests and Four Counties is the first – and the pilot site – for our regional Partnership.”

Point-of-Care testing allows nurses or other health care professionals to test blood samples immediately using a new portable device. Administrative and medical staff from Middlesex Hospital Alliance saw the system at work firsthand last year on a site visit to the Quinte Health Care North Hastings site in Bancroft, Ontario where Point-of-Care was recently implemented.

Instead of having a fully staffed lab on site, Bancroft’s Point-of-Care equipment automates many common blood tests. ER nurses are trained to take patient samples and operate the equipment. And, results are available in an average of 10 minutes. Costs have been reduced and the level of patient care increased. With 10 inpatient beds and 14,000 ER visits each year, the site is very similar to, and faces some of the same challenges, as FCHS.

At Four Counties, all emergency department blood work will be Point-of-Care and urgent inpatient testing will also use the system. “Anywhere that time is important, where immediate results are required to assist urgent diagnosis, this system will be a benefit,” Turpin says.

Additionally, the system is comprehensive. Nurses will have new chips imbedded in their ID badges, so that when they test a blood sample, they will also scan their own badge and the patient's ID bar code bracelet. In this way, when the Point-of-Care device prints out blood test results it indicates the patient information, such as doctor's name and patient's age, the nurse who administered the test, and the results, all on one report, Turpin explains.

This new standard is a state-of-the-art system and will have a positive impact on patient care. "This system is a benefit to patient safety also because the risk of error is decreased," Turpin says. "When testing is done immediately and at the point of care, there are fewer opportunities for error, no waiting for lab results and follow-up phone calls. It is very efficient."

The system is also cost effective. Small hospitals such as Four Counties and Bancroft don't require a full lab system for the small number of routine tests that they do. This way, tests can be performed on site, without carrying the costs of a full lab system.

Training staff for Point-of-Care testing took place during August and the system is now being used at the Four Counties Health Services emergency department.