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MEDIA RELEASE

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More Healthcare, Fewer Beds

Hospitals are frequently described by bed size; beds have been the yardstick that measured the size and importance of a hospital. "Today, we are treating more people *and* have fewer beds. We are providing many more outpatient services," Ineke Haan, chair of the Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA), board of directors, says.

Outpatients include those people who come to the hospital emergency with a broken thumb or a child with an ear infection. Last year, almost 130,000 outpatients visited a clinic at MHA. That's an important healthcare partner in the region and for individual families.

The MHA outpatient clinics are busy. At FCCH total outpatient visits last year topped 30,000; at SMGH it was almost 96,000 – that's a lot of healthcare activity –not a lot of beds.

"When you compare Strathroy activity with ten years ago, we are providing much more care with barely more resources," Nancy Maltby-Webster, COO for Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA), says, "By targeting the services that our particular community needs we can deliver more efficient healthcare."

These changes aren't unique to MHA. Other regions in Ontario are operating in a similar environment. Quoted recently in an article in the Ottawa Citizen, Dr. Robert Cushman, head of the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, says, "It's fair to say hospitals can't be all things to all people. Hospitals have to look at a niche market – one does something, another does something else."

"Our senior management has been monitoring a 'niche' future for MHA," Haan says, "With surgical programs such as Hips & Knees and Cataracts, we are assisting the region in reducing

wait times for these targeted surgeries and providing the healthcare needed in our community – efficiently and close to home.”

Mike Mazza, CEO at MHA explains, “Our Hips & Knees program shows how a smaller hospital can respond quickly and successfully, working in partnerships, to meet the needs in our community. This is exactly the sort of niche program that community hospitals can and will operate successfully and efficiently.”

Board chair Haan says, “The adaptability of our MHA staff, physicians and volunteers to a changing healthcare climate has been exceptional,” Haan says, “The board is appreciative of the high level of staff excellence. And, it is always gratifying to hear it from others, too. The Review Team (RT) conducting the recent external review at SMGH praised the full and active participation of the MHA Senior Team, their professionalism and the work they had done already in balancing the budget.”

In its review summary, which will be made public by the SW LHIN later this week, the RT stated, “SMGH Senior and Departmental managers have already identified cost savings measures through operational improvement initiatives. Implementation is well underway and it is significant to note that senior management were active participants in the process and major contributors to the outcome.”