

MEDIA RELEASE

Breast Reconstruction Program improves access for women in Southeastern Ontario

More comprehensive program provides quicker service and more information about treatment options for women with breast cancer

October 19, 2016 - Kingston, ON – A breast cancer diagnosis can be a life-changing experience and now Kingston General Hospital (KGH) and Hotel Dieu Hospital (HDH) are providing a new level of support to patients through a more comprehensive breast reconstruction program that connects patients with a breast reconstruction surgeon sooner than ever before.

In our region between 14 and 20 per cent of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer will require a mastectomy, which includes the removal of one or both breasts. While effective, this treatment can have a lasting impact on a patient.

“There is good evidence, especially in young women, that if we are able to offer breast reconstruction immediately following a mastectomy, it improves a patient’s general self-confidence and well-being,” says surgical oncologist Dr. Jay Engel. “As we increase the number of reconstruction surgeries offered in Kingston, we will be able to help more women return to their normal life quicker than before.”

With the support of the South East Regional Cancer Program (SERCP) and in partnership with Queen’s University, KGH and HDH have recruited plastic surgeon and reconstruction specialist Dr. Glykeria Martou to help build a regional breast reconstruction program. The program includes reconstruction clinics where breast cancer patients can find out more about their options and decide on an individualized surgical treatment plan.

“We are now able to offer every woman with a breast cancer diagnosis in our community the option of reconstruction as part of our program at KGH and Hotel Dieu,” says Dr. Martou. “This shared program provides more opportunities to assist patients in making an informed decision on what is best for them with respect to both the timing and type of reconstruction.”

There are many reconstruction options but generally patients fall into two pathways, either immediate or delayed surgery. Immediate reconstruction surgery takes place at the same time as the mastectomy so that the patient only has to undergo anesthesia and the subsequent recovery process once. Delayed reconstruction occurs after a mastectomy or lumpectomy and chemotherapy and/or radiation are completed. Reconstruction procedures that can be done on an outpatient basis are performed at HDH, while the more complex procedures requiring a hospital stay take place at KGH.

In the past patients had to be referred by their oncologist or family physician to see a plastic surgeon; often they were referred to a surgeon in Toronto or Ottawa. Now, the new program gives patients the opportunity to access the procedure closer to home, and to be more involved in choosing an option that works best for them.

“When I was diagnosed with breast cancer I felt vulnerable and a little lost,” says patient Liz Adamson. “By fully understanding my options after my mastectomy, I could make the best informed decisions for me and improved my quality of life beyond breast cancer.”

For people who are looking to learn more, the community's first-ever Breast Reconstruction Awareness (BRA) Day will be held on October 20 at the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Starting at 6:00 p.m., the event features patients who have undergone breast reconstruction surgery as well as physicians who will explain what to expect and what reconstruction can achieve. For more information and to register visit <http://www.bra-day.com/event/bra-day-kingston/>

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Media Contacts

John Pereira
Strategic Communications Advisor
Kingston General Hospital
613-549-6666 ext. 6875
pereiraj@kgh.kari.net

Anne Rutherford
Public Relations
Hotel Dieu Hospital
613-544-3400, ext. 3380
rutherfa@hdh.kari.net

ABOUT KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

Kingston General Hospital is a community of people dedicated to transforming the patient and family experience through innovative and collaborative approaches to care, knowledge and leadership. As southeastern Ontario's leading centre for complex-acute and specialty care, and home to the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario, KGH serves almost 500,000 people through its Kingston facility and 24 regional affiliate and satellite sites. Fully affiliated with Queen's University, KGH is a research and teaching hospital which is home to 2,400 health-care students and 175 health researchers. KGH is ranked as one of Canada's Top 40 Research Hospitals by Research Infosource. To learn more, visit www.kgh.on.ca or join the conversation at www.kghconnect.ca

ABOUT HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Hotel Dieu Hospital is the ambulatory care teaching and research hospital for Kingston and Southeastern Ontario, affiliated with Queen's University. We provide expert care to more than 500,000 people in the region through specialized programs including pediatrics, medicine, ophthalmology, cardiology, urology, surgery, mental health, oncology and urgent care. We deliver quality, safe health care, while advancing innovative research and educating the health care professionals of the future. Leading the transformation of ambulatory care. www.hoteldieu.com

ABOUT THE SOUTH EAST REGIONAL CANCER PROGRAM

The [South East Regional Cancer Program](#) (SERCP) promotes seamless, high-quality, patient and family-centred cancer care for the residents of southeastern Ontario. This region is home to nearly 500,000 people and stretches from Brighton to Prescott and north to Bancroft. Affiliated with Cancer Care Ontario, SERCP strives for cancer risk reduction, early detection, excellent patient experiences and better patient outcomes by helping facilitate the high-quality delivery of cancer services in the South East region, while ensuring cancer care is delivered according to province-wide standards.

ABOUT BRA DAY

Bra Day is an event that promotes education, awareness and access for women considering post-mastectomy breast reconstruction. There are Bra Day events held across Canada and in seven countries. At the event, leading plastic surgeons provide breast reconstruction education and are available to answer your questions. The highlight of a BRA Day event is the Show & Tell Lounge, an innovative space where volunteers show attendees the real-life results of their breast reconstruction. To find out more visit their website at www.bra-day.com.