



## Kids Health Alliance launches neonatal virtual care project between SickKids and Markham Stouffville Hospital

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Virtual care has gained traction in just about every part of the health-care system in the past few weeks. When implemented correctly, virtual care can be safe, improve access to health-care providers, result in cost savings and improve the overall patient and clinician experience.

Kids Health Alliance (KHA) is excited to announce the launch of a new virtual care project that will allow the care team at Markham Stouffville Hospital's (MSH) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to consult experts at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) with the added use of video. All with the hope of improving coordination of care for the province's tiniest patients.

The project introduces video capabilities between consulting physicians and nurses in MSH's NICU and the SickKids Acute Care Transport Service (ACTS) team. The SickKids ACTS team brings the expertise of intensive care to community hospitals. With specialized training and equipment, the SickKids ACTS team provides high-quality care to a critically ill infant or child.

Currently in Ontario, 49 NICUs use the Neonatal Consult, Transfer and Transport program to seek input from paediatric and neonatal medical specialists. Up until now, this program has been accessed exclusively over the phone. The addition of video will better support the MSH team to determine whether they can safely keep the baby closer to home or if the baby needs to be transported to SickKids to receive more specialized care.

"Every second counts with these tiny patients. We hope that by participating in this KHA project to add the ability to see the baby in real time and monitor how they are doing will improve their health outcomes and allow us to deliver enhanced quality care close to home for the entire family," says Jo-anne Marr, President and CEO of MSH.

For patients and families, staying closer to home improves their overall experience and eases some of the stress of a prolonged hospital stay. There are also financial benefits to avoiding unnecessary transfers by reducing health-care system costs associated with land or air transfers, and keeping babies in the community at a lower cost per day to the health system.

"Adding video capabilities to this process will provide eyes on the baby, significantly improving the SickKids team's ability to determine if the baby needs to be transferred and what measures can be taken to keep the baby stable until the transport team arrives. The SickKids team will also be able to collaborate better with MSH to identify and avoid unnecessary transfers," says Larissa Smit, Interim Executive Director at KHA.

Through KHA, the project teams at MSH and SickKids will participate in an evaluation to measure outcomes, including clinician's perceptions about the benefits of adding video, avoidance of unnecessary transfers and overall experience. KHA will also monitor if the added use of video translates to more "advice only" calls that allow the baby to stay at MSH.

“Access to virtual care is more important than ever. In a matter of weeks virtual care has become a primary method of health-care delivery. We are excited to launch this initiative with Markham Stouffville Hospital that will provide timely advice between clinicians and a better experience for patients and their families.,” says Dr. Ronald Cohn, Chair of the KHA Board and President and CEO of SickKids.

Based on evaluation results and the interest of KHA Partners, KHA plans to expand the project to other Community Hospital Partners. Expansion opportunities will be determined in alignment with other virtual care projects underway at the KHA Founding Members, such as the neonatal and paediatric virtual care project between CHEO and North Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Kingston General Hospital and Iqaluit’s Qikiqtani General Hospital.



*Interprofessional NICU team at Markham Stouffville Hospital participating in a test-run of the video virtual care using a simulation mannequin.*

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### **About Kids Health Alliance**

Kids Health Alliance, founded in 2017 by The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Holland Bloorview) and the CHEO, is a not-for-profit network of health care organizations that collaborate to make tangible improvements in care for children and youth. The Network currently includes the three founding specialty pediatric hospitals and six community hospitals.

Underpinning the network are a number of key guiding principles, including a commitment to patient-centred care that helps ensure children and youth are able to access the best care when they need it and where they need it. We are committed to leveraging the unique expertise of all of our partners, facilitating the spread and scale of what we know works, making evidence-based decisions and planning for sustainability from the start to ensure we are using resources efficiently and effectively.

To learn more, visit [www.kidshealthalliance.ca](http://www.kidshealthalliance.ca) or follow KHA on Twitter: [twitter.com/KidsHealthAllnc](https://twitter.com/KidsHealthAllnc)

### **About Markham Stouffville Hospital**

Markham Stouffville Hospital is one of Ontario's leading community hospitals. Across our two sites (Markham and Uxbridge) and the Reactivation Care Centre, our more than 500 physicians, 25 midwives, 2,300 staff and 1,000 volunteers deliver an extraordinary patient experience to the residents of Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Uxbridge and beyond.

We are proud to have a Level 2C NICU that can care for babies as young as 30 weeks gestation. The dedicated interprofessional team in our NICU provide safe, high quality care to more than 415 infants each year.

For more information: visit [www.msh.on.ca](http://www.msh.on.ca).

### **About The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)**

The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) is recognized as one of the world's foremost paediatric health-care institutions and is Canada's leading centre dedicated to advancing children's health through the integration of patient care, research and education. Founded in 1875 and affiliated with the University of Toronto, SickKids is one of Canada's most research-intensive hospitals and has generated discoveries that have helped children globally. Its mission is to provide the best in complex and specialized family-centred care; pioneer scientific and clinical advancements; share expertise; foster an academic environment that nurtures health-care professionals; and champion an accessible, comprehensive and sustainable child health system. SickKids is a founding member of Kids Health Alliance, a network of partners working to create a high quality, consistent and coordinated approach to paediatric health care that is centred around children, youth and their families. SickKids is proud of its vision for *Healthier Children. A Better World.*