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PRESIDENT & CEO
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Report of the President & CEO **IWK Annual General Meeting / June 23, 2021**

It scarcely seems possible that another year has passed, one in which the ongoing global pandemic has dominated many, if not most, aspects of our lives. Initial adaptations healthcare organizations including IWK Health made to respond to the pandemic such as reorganizing service delivery to prepare for COVID patients, standing up testing and assessment centres, reducing services, defining new COVID services and moving to virtual platforms have transformed over time to balancing our role in health system capacity for COVID-19 service delivery with the maintenance of safe, accessible core services for women, children and families. It has taken the work of people from across our organization and partners from the Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health, Dalhousie University and our community to adapt to the changes required and step into the challenge. I am proud of the teams at the IWK for their contributions and for always using the best evidence available in a changing landscape to make decisions, chart a course and change directions as needed. Who would have thought that the IWK would have a team working at Northwood caring for elders? or being the site where our senior citizens first had access to their vaccine? or sharing staff with Nova Scotia Health for testing and tracing? But we did.

To state it simply, our teams and partners did their usual work — often in new ways as we rose to the occasion to deliver our services and to be a vital part of the system response to the pandemic. That is who we are at the IWK.

No matter what your role at the IWK, this year has been a time of rapid change, adaptation and most of all, uncertainty. Information has changed as knowledge has grown and experience has been gained. This hasn't been easy and has been harder on some than others. The constant that has supported us making our way through has been the people and there is no doubt that in times of crisis, like the past 15 months, what supports success are common goals underpinned by shared values- those things that define who we are. This year at IWK Health we have seen those values come to the forefront — a commitment to resilience in the face of adversity, a focus on wanting to make a difference by being and doing our best, the importance of kindness and empathy, the awareness of the strength gained by working together internally and with our community and the dedication to learning and discovery. Articulating these values, where we have succeeded in living them and where we have faltered and still need to improve, will help pave the road for our way forward as we emerge from the pandemic.



Strategic Results

SYSTEM LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

The focus on equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation continues to gain strength at the IWK but there remains much work to do. As we look to reflect on the learnings from the pandemic, the impact of inequities and racism on health has been underlined and put in the public eye. The IWK Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation Steering Committee with associated action groups that will report directly to the president & CEO with regular reporting to the IWK Board, has been formed. The collaborative work with Indigenous partners to develop next steps of the IWK Indigenous Health Strategy has been completed. An Indigenous Health Consultant began work at the IWK March 1, 2021 supported by a two-year federally funded grant. Implementation of the recommendations from the BLM Listening Sessions have been identified as a strategic initiative for the upcoming year.

One of the “silver linings” of the pandemic has been the opportunity to strengthen existing relationships and forge new ones as a health system within the province. The ongoing contributions of IWK Health to the provincial management of COVID-19 have been important and include:

- adaptations in services focused on public health measures
- utilization of appropriate virtual care and working from home
- understanding the redeployment capabilities and having responsive staff
- proactively scaling up resources in high demand pandemic areas
- reconfiguring patient screening and navigation processes
- launching a successful COVID-19 assessment and testing centre with 811, as well as piloting the swish method of testing for children before roll-out across the province
- launching the prototype community vaccine clinic
- developing and providing resources for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children aged 12 and up who want to become vaccinated

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The formal process for the development of our new research strategic action plan, an iterative, multi-phased approach, has been launched and will continue through the summer. This year saw the revitalization of the operational Research Advisory Committee as well as the successful creation of a Board Committee to provide strategic oversight for Research and Innovation.

Following an international search, Dr. Janet Curran, PhD, RN, Professor, School of Nursing, Dalhousie, and Clinician Scientist at IWK Health was appointed as the inaugural QPS Applied Research Chair. The first of its kind in Canada, this role will integrate research into the delivery of patient safety to ensure the highest quality of care for Nova Scotians while also building capacity for health system improvement.

Five IWK Researchers were successful in funding competitions and their total grant capture was: \$3,119,306. This represents a very high success rate and reflects the calibre of the research proposals. Over all at the IWK there are more



than 700 active studies underway by 120 research investigators, 365 research staff and 225 trainees, students and volunteers.

ACHIEVING AS A HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATION

High Reliability Organizations have a laser focus on safety, continuous improvement and people. This focus has been critical as we have worked our way through the pandemic this year and has allowed us to identify concerns, respond and support improvements.

As part of our ongoing work with Solutions for Patient Safety, our teams had early recognition of an increase in our serious safety event rate similar to that being seen across the international network. This allowed the identification of ways to better support teams and examine data to understand common causes.

Closures in non-urgent care seen in wave one of the pandemic were not required in subsequent waves and most services were re-opened by the fall of 2020. Impacts on surgical and ambulatory care waitlists caused by the pause in services during wave one of the pandemic are significant and teams continue to address the additional and considerable wait lists for several service areas, notably, women's and pediatric surgery. In addition to the focused LEAN work by the surgical teams, operating room renovations with federal stimulus funding and enhanced nursing recruitment, we are exploring alternate options to improve access for surgical patients. In the last quarter of 2020-21, an increased acuity and volume in Mental Health and Addictions services with a 15-20 per cent increase overall demand. Adoption of virtual services by the team has minimized the impact on access throughout the year and has allowed for flexing of services to help meet the increased demand.

During the pandemic our Human Resources team has been agile and responsive, creating opportunities for our staff to be redeployed throughout our organization and to the broader health system, particularly in support of public health, testing, and vaccination support. Innovative staff supports have been implemented over the course of the year in response to need and to focus on the health and well-being of staff, physicians and leadership.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

In a year with considerable uncertainty, the IWK was able to deliver a balanced financial result in fiscal 2020-21, all while overcoming obstacles faced by the pandemic. In addition, the organization was able to complete redevelopment of the PICU and MRI renovations, as well as advance many infrastructure improvements as the result of one-time government stimulus funding. The IWK was also able to advance on its master space program, an important strategic priority.

This fiscal, the Department of Health and Wellness announced its commitment to fund the redevelopment of the Emergency Department, with the project commencing in fiscal 2021-22 and continuing for four years, with government investment totaling \$100 million. A redesigned emergency department will help

address the increase in patients, better address complex cases and mental health concerns and encourage more innovation among care providers. This redevelopment will allow physicians and staff to deliver care in a world-class environment designed to best meet the needs of the patients and families we serve.

During the pandemic, the IWK was able to be nimble, adapt to processes and technology as they evolved, and solved problems collaboratively within the IWK, and with our patients, families and system partners. At the beginning of the pandemic, many work arrangements, care and service delivery models were rapidly developed and decisions were made with respect to how teams were to operate. Some teams remained onsite, some teams made the move to work remotely and some team members had a combination of onsite and virtual work. At the height of the pandemic, upwards of 30 per cent of the IWK's workforce were working from home, including physicians, clinicians, researchers and support staff. There is now a unique opportunity to continue to rethink care models, the location of services, and what supports truly need to be in place to position the IWK as a resilient, high reliability organization.

IWK Foundation

The work of the IWK Foundation continued as a strong partnership throughout the year and despite the need to cancel the 2020 edition of the Telethon, the Foundation pivoted and with their partners at CTV, delivered an amazing virtual Telethon for 2021.

This year saw the completion of the critical care redevelopment, with the opening of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and the core family support spaces in late summer 2020. We also took delivery of the rest of the fleet of new technologically enabled "Smart Beds" supported in whole by the community through the Foundation. The Foundation also stepped forward to secure the Chair in Quality and Patient Safety, the first of its kind in Canada.

When the pandemic arrived, business for the Foundation changed as well but that has not kept their staff from adapting and continuing to support our needs. As always, the Foundation has been there for us connecting us with our community, even when facing the same challenges of COVID-19.

IWK Auxiliary

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the IWK Auxiliary who continued its work on behalf of our patients and families even though they were not on-site. This year celebrates a very important milestone for them – 75 years of service and support for the hospital! We thank them for their ongoing contributions to making the life of our patients a little easier.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank many people for the extraordinary efforts this year:

- our community, patients and families who, even when the restrictions meant they could not be together in usual ways, did their part to help keep each other safe,
- our public health officials, especially Dr. Robert Strang who has worked tirelessly on behalf of Nova Scotians,
- Premiers MacNeil and Rankin who led side by side with Public Health and made difficult decisions,
- our colleagues at Department of Health & Wellness and Nova Scotia Health who have been amazing collaborative partners,
- our Board, who have been dedicated, supportive and engaged
- all of our physicians, staff and volunteers who have gone above and beyond,
- and a special thanks to my executive leadership team who have helped steer the organization through the storm — always advocating for our patients and families, the wider community and for our staff and physicians.

At the IWK we continue to focus on providing necessary high quality, safe care to women, children and families; researching and innovating to create new knowledge; supporting and collaborating with partners while being responsible for managing wisely and carefully. The way in which we approach these important responsibilities has served us, our patients and the community well as we faced the unexpected and extraordinary events surrounding the pandemic. It is with this collective strength we will face the future and continue to succeed.

IWK Strong — True to who we are!

Respectfully submitted

Krista Jangaard

President & CEO

