



NEWS RELEASE from Halton Healthcare

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Contributing to the fight against COVID-19

Healthcare workers have been on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19 since March 2020. Today, as the burden of COVID on hospitals gradually eases, 300 healthcare workers at Halton Healthcare are rolling up their sleeves to participate in a COVID-19 related research study that will involve more than 3,000 healthcare workers across the GTA and help experts gain a better understanding of the natural history of COVID-19, in particular the antibody response.

Halton Healthcare is one of many hospital sites participating in this *Seroprevalence of anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibodies - COVID-19 Antibodies in Healthcare Workers* study headed by Sick Kids.

“This study was originally designed in the early stages of the pandemic, before the vaccine, to study the antibody levels amongst healthcare workers who may have been in contact with the COVID-19 virus,” explained Dr. Laurence Chau, Principal Investigator of the COVID-19 Antibody Research Study at Halton Healthcare. “It was going to examine how often healthcare workers are infected, the levels of antibodies naturally produced in response to the virus and how long these antibodies would provide these healthcare workers with immunity.”

“However, the development of the COVID-19 vaccine was a real game changer because the vaccine triggers the body to produce antibodies,” continued Dr. Chau. “Therefore, the study’s protocols had to be changed with the rollout of the vaccine to measure both the levels of the antibodies produced naturally by the body to the COVID-19 virus as well as antibodies produced in response to the vaccine. The study will examine the potential benefits of antibody testing as a useful tool to guide healthcare worker management and inform on targeted testing strategies.”

The healthcare workers at Halton Healthcare participating in the study include physicians, nurses, allied healthcare workers as well as clerks, screeners and environmental and food services staff. Each person will have blood drawn at three different stages throughout the duration of the study.

“I volunteered for the study mainly because I was curious as to whether I had antibodies,” explained Sara Kennedy, a Registered Practical Nurse, Nursing Resource Team at Halton Healthcare. “I think that it is important that as a hospital we participate in these research studies so we can learn more about the spread of this virus and immunity among healthcare workers.”

Study outcomes could result in a better understanding of the level of herd immunity in healthcare workers, which may be useful at a provincial level to help guide public health decisions. It may also guide healthcare management (e.g. return to work and patient management decisions).

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COVID-19 Research Study

“This study is just one of many research projects currently being conducted under the recently revitalized Clinic Research Program at Halton Healthcare,” concluded Dr. Michael Heffernan, Director of the Clinical Research Program. “We have participated in several COVID-19 trials and have a number of other exciting clinical research studies currently underway.”

About Halton Healthcare

Halton Healthcare is a healthcare organization comprised of three community hospitals - Georgetown Hospital, Milton District Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, along with several community programs and services. Together we provide healthcare services to nearly 400,000 residents in the communities of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. Halton Healthcare has been recognized for its best practices in a number of patient safety and patient care initiatives. For more information, visit www.haltonhealthcare.com. Follow us on Twitter @HaltonHlthcare, Facebook and Instagram.

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