



## *Symphony Senior Living* *In concert with your life*

May 13, 2020

### **Update on Covid ongoing quarantine and items for Residents, Family and Team Members**

Well, I guess it is Happy 2-month Covid Pandemic DAY! It seems like a lot longer than two months since the WHO declared Covid 19 as a Pandemic, but that was March 12, 2020 and here we are two months later.

On a MUCH more fun note – **HAPPY NURSES WEEK!!!!** That is something to celebrate 😊 to all our wonderful, caring and hard working nurses we hope you enjoy the week of fun and treats at each home. You have made a huge difference in the lives of our residents and teams. Many may not realize that because we staff with 24/7 onsite RPNs, we have been able to reduce the amount of possible contagion sources in our buildings. Things that had to change in the past two months: Virtual Wound Care, where we could not get a dedicated CCAC nurse; Virtual Palliative Care; declaring deaths and preparing bodies for funeral home and so many other items – All of these we were able to bring in house with the help of our virtual doctors and the agencies that were able to make the change on their end. All this because our nurses and 3 of 4 Executive Directors are also Nurses, were able to handle the responsibilities and either had the appropriate training or upgraded to handle the situation. They are creative and took the initiative to keep all our residents and team members staff!! A HUGE THANK YOU!!

We have made it through two months and ZERO covid cases. I believe based on watching daily the case levels in LTC and retirement homes we are at the peak now and hopefully will start seeing some homes start coming out of outbreak. There have been 146 deaths in the Ottawa area (not including Carleton Place region) in LTC facilities and 7 deaths in retirement homes. Many retirement homes are now in outbreak officially, not all have deaths.

A HUGE thank you to **all of you** for this as I know it has been a group effort: residents, family support and team members. We are only as good as our weakest link and everyone has been so diligent in their efforts. The creativity and positive attitudes have got us through the stress and strain, and I hope soon we can welcome back family visits in a controlled and safe manner. There is no word on this yet from the MOH or others and from your input to me, caution is what everyone is requesting. My guess is perhaps by June we will see some limited family visits being allowed, but at this point my crystal ball is a bit foggy!

### **Public Health Units, requests to inspect:**

Recently, all public health units have been mandated by the province to inspect all retirement homes and LTCs. Our position has been, this is not an essential visit and unless they are entering for a serious issue or outbreak, we felt the risk did not justify the benefit at this time. We have had discussions now with both health units responsible for the homes.

Recently, we were able to accommodate a request by the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Public Health Unit to inspect Carleton Place with a virtual tour and Zoom conference. This went very well, and the inspector was very accommodating and thorough. The call took almost three hours, but we were able to get through all the items with only one small recommendation to try and get a bit more space between tables in the dining room. I want to thank all the families that assisted with getting the message to the authorities that we preferred this option and also the Leeds, Grenville, Lanark health unit's leadership for trying this approach as a novel alternative to meet all of our needs.

The Ottawa Public health unit is working through their list of more critical properties first and will circle back with us. We have informed them we will not be granting access at this time for a preventative general "inspection" but we are happy to do a virtual zoom call and tour. We hope they will see the reasoning here



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and if they don't and insist on a physical tour we will reach out and let the families of those homes know. The risk is they are going to many other homes and even if the home is not in outbreak, they risk bringing the virus in for a general inspection. These inspections might have had value and less risk back in early March, today its too late, they are too risky after everything that we have done to stay covid free.

### **Agency Staff: Palliative and Wound Care.**

As many of you know, we access several services through the CCAA/LHIN including some PSW support, Wound Care and Palliative care. These are services normally offered to anyone living in their own home as our residents are. During March we asked all agencies to devote staff to us for PSW and other services so they would not have to go from home to home and risk spreading the virus.

We had great cooperation from the CCAC/LHIN and various service providers. Where they could not give us dedicated staff, they agreed to do virtual training, guidance and our staff picked up the actual hands on work. Our nurses are trained in wound care and palliative care.

We have had only one exception on this as a solution, and that is at our Kanata home where we have had to replace the agency performing wound care as they would not do virtual support for some reason; we have separately notified families affected and have picked those costs up temporarily as this gets worked out.

At any time, should you prefer, the services you may be receiving via the CCAC/LHIN can be performed by our staff. We would need to reassess, get doctor orders (in some cases only), let you know the incremental charge for the services, and have you sign the care service form. You can choose to do this temporarily during the pandemic or ongoing, but we want you to know it is an option. We do not have responsibility over the staff of the agencies, and we can not monitor how they are doing in self isolation outside of work, or should they get called to provide service to another home. We do screen ALL agencies workers when they enter and they must verbally commit to our questions, but they are not our employees.

Please talk to the Executive Director if you wish to discuss yours or your loved one's situation and options.

### **Testing:**

We are able to get testing for any new symptomatic cases, new admissions or staff members and the turnaround is about 24-48 hours. We now have enough swabs to test all staff and residents should we end up in outbreak, with even one positive case.

There was discussion from the health units about testing all staff and residents, but we have not had direction to do so yet. We will be able to perform the tests in house and not require outside agencies to assist as we have enough nursing staff to assist.

### **PPE:**

We are adequately stocked with PPE, that has been a long haul and an ongoing battle to monitor and reorder. Supply from various sources on some items is still tight, but we can get enough of the key supplies for now and a potential outbreak. We are providing the inventory levels to the MOH daily and the LHIN has also asked for our levels separately.

### **Blood Oximeters:**

Recently the MOH issued a larger list of atypical symptoms for Covid 19, particularly for seniors. These include a long list and includes confusion, light headedness, nausea and other items. If it is Covid 19 related, then the underlying issue maybe, the blood oxygen level is depleted. A simple quick check, when in doubt



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using a blood Oximeter (a small device on the finger to measure heart rate and oxygen levels) is another tool the homes now have to help determine next steps or urgency. In any case, any symptoms as indicated by the MOH guidelines will result in a test being ordered, if the doctor feels there is a concern.

### **Staffing:**

Our team members have been awesome, and we thank all of you for sharing your positive comments of encouragement recently on our Facebook page, they will be up in a new section on our website soon. We continue to ask our team members to be super careful outside of work. They are wearing masks and social distancing outside of home. They know their responsibility is huge and they are now one of the only sources of germs coming into the home – no offense intended!

Our corporate staff also is very careful and remains mostly isolated in case they are called on to assist hands on in a community. Recently two of our corporate team members were deployed in April to assist with a staff shortage at Forest Valley Terrace; but they have now staffed up again and been retrained so our team is back at home isolating.

As things open around the city, it will be more important than ever for the team to be cautious with lots of handwashing and social distancing. If you are in doubt and have any symptoms at all please let us know, even if you are off for a few days, don't hope they will clear up let's deal with them. We can get testing very quickly, don't wait until your next shift, let us know right away. Please ensure you are taking your temps twice daily and self-monitoring how you feel.

Well, it has been two months of a lot of learning. It is not the way, I wished to learn the many things we have, but often crisis creates innovation. We have seen some great things happening around the homes on so many fronts. Things we didn't think we could do before - we are doing, residents that had upsetting behaviors due to dementia have settled (we believe this is largely do to less outside distraction, same caregivers providing care as we are staff cohorting in Moments neighborhoods and a very structured, but active regular daily routine), staff absenteeism is an all-time low, morale everywhere is up and our social engagement on Facebook is through the roof!

We all very much appreciate the support and patience of our residents, their families and loved ones. The kind words have been very encouraging, making long days - short and it all worthwhile. We will continue to keep you informed as things open or other items develop.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to your Executive Director or myself. Have a wonderful rest of the week into the long weekend and happy late Mother's Day to all the moms!

Sincerely,

Lisa Brush  
CEO  
Symphony Senior Living Ottawa LP