

September 9th, 2022

Summer, usually a quieter time in the hospital, has been anything but in the summer of 2022. “Unprecedented” became the descriptor of the summer. Throughout the past few months, we have been in Surge 3 almost every day. The general pediatric wards have been overflowing, with similar high acuity and volumes in the NICU, PICU and ED. This DA will focus on the exceptional teamwork of the **General Pediatric Ward Team** during the past few months. This team, under the expert leadership of Dr. Mylène Dandavino and interim associate program head Dr. Catherine Rich, includes the many pediatricians who cover the wards, the nursing teams, and administrative professionals on the inpatient units, and our pediatric residents. Our new chief residents, Drs. Mariam Naguib and Kimberly Wong have been working extremely hard, alongside our new Pediatric Program Director, Dr. Najma Ahmed, to fill unexpected holes in the schedule and keep things running smoothly and safely. It has truly been a trial by fire for all three leaders in the residency program, who were called upon to re-organize coverage schedules repeatedly!

Not only have inpatient numbers been extremely high (on one weekend in July, there were 28 patients admitted on each team, compared to the usual maximum of 24), these are complex, sick patients. The ward teams were constantly aware of the inter-dependence of all our services. A full PICU meant that the wards sometimes needed to care for patients who might normally be in the PICU or ACU. They were also acutely aware of the impact of full wards on the Emergency Department, which filled up with patients requiring admission waiting for a bed; attention to efficient patient flow was critical, and handled with grace (under pressure) by our teams.

While dealing with all of these organizational crises, learning continued. The teams had to quickly learn about yet another new virus – parechovirus – which causes meningoencephalitis and a sepsis-like picture in neonates. Advances in care also proceeded. The use of Nitronox for light procedural sedation was successfully introduced this spring, and is now being used regularly.

Added to the stress of high volumes, new viruses, and new programs, were short-staffing, related to the maternity leaves of 8 (!) regular ward attending pediatricians and frequent COVID-related absences. This stressful combination required exceptional teamwork and dedication. Teams were frequently working with fewer than the ideal numbers of physicians and residents. Some pediatricians returned from vacation early to fill gaps. We are also grateful to the new replacement pediatricians Drs. Gabrielle Bibas and Karen Trudel for their assistance with coverage.

The very best of the MCH was on display this summer on our wards: teams working together to support each other and provide safe and excellent patient care. Congratulations to the entire General Pediatric Ward Team and all of our pediatric residents for their exceptional efforts.

Have a great weekend.

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