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For immediate release

## **Donors Enhance Patient Care Through New Equipment in Laboratory**

(Thunder Bay, ON) – Polymerase Chain Reaction testing, known more commonly as ‘PCR’, is a remarkable, gene-based technology that is quickly becoming the new standard in medical laboratory analysis of infections. At the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, this technology was recently implemented thanks to a grant of \$79,474 from the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation that was funded by the generosity of donors in our community.

In particular, the PCR equipment (known as the GeneXpert) is used to assess patients suspected with antibiotic-resistant infections caused by the organisms MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) and VRE (Vancomycin-resistant Enterococci). Patients carrying these organisms must be placed in isolation to minimize the risk of transmission. Approximately 700 patients a year are placed in isolation for this sole reason.

The GeneXpert has been in place since April, and already, improvements are being seen in patient care. “With PCR testing, we can avoid isolating patients, thus improving the experience of care. This is always our priority as leaders in Patient and Family Centred Care,” said Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott, Executive Vice President, Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive at the Hospital. “In addition, PCR can provide financial savings that can be reinvested into the areas that need it most. We are grateful to the generous donors who have made this possible.”

Patient care improvements are always front and centre and Georgia Carr, Manager, Clinical Lab, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre explained, “The GeneXpert provides us with the opportunity to provide a result that previously took 2 to 5 days in as little as 1 hour, dramatically reducing the time to test and allowing decisions to be made right away in the best interest of the patient.” Added Wendy Gouliquer, Clinical Coordinator, Microbiology, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, “With this new equipment, we also have the opportunity to provide a higher quality of result by detecting smaller amounts of bacteria than previously detected.”



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Hilary McIver, Manager, Infection Control and Risk Management, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre further explained, “The GeneXpert allows for rapid and highly specific diagnosis of infectious diseases. We are just at the infancy stages of using this machine in the treatment of our patients. The high sensitivity of the PCR permits virus detection soon after infection and even before the onset of the disease. This early detection may give our health care providers a significant lead time in treatment. We have seen great savings in the length of time our patients must reside in isolation due to MRSA and VRE colonization.”

Funding for the GeneXpert was made possible thanks to donors like Graham Post, who discussed his family’s reason for giving. “We are grateful for the services and care provided to us by the Health Sciences Centre. We donate to help keep our facility up-to-date so the residents of the region can access the best possible care.”

“We are extremely grateful for donors like the Posts and so many others who choose to give unrestricted gifts to the Health Sciences Foundation,” said Jody Nesti, Chair, Board of Directors, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. “This allows us to distribute funds to priority areas as identified by the Health Sciences Centre. As you have heard, even though the PCR equipment is not seen by patients and families, it has a very important role to play in improving patients’ experiences, specifically by removing them from isolation if not required. We’re delighted that it has resulted in such dramatic improvements to patient care.”

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