

News Release - (for immediate release)

New smoking policy planned for New Year at SFMH

In an important initiative, St. Francis Memorial Hospital is implementing designated smoking areas on hospital property. Smoking in all other areas will be prohibited.

“As a health care facility committed to providing the safest and healthiest environment possible for patients, staff, physicians and visitors, our ultimate goal is to become smoke-free later this year,” says SFMH CEO Randy Penney.

However, Penney notes, being sensitive and compassionate to the needs of those who smoke, SFMH will begin by limiting the areas where smoking will be permitted on hospital property. This compromise respects the rights of non-smokers and addresses the needs of smokers.

In cooperation with a committee comprised of SFMH staff and physicians representing smokers and non-smokers, two designated smoking areas have been chosen. These areas comply with the 9-metre distance restriction from entrances and exits that is required by the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and have been assessed for safety concerns such as adequate lighting and traffic volume. Clear signage will be posted to indicate these areas.

Cooperation in abiding by the new rules will ensure the safety and comfort of patients, visitors and staff. Those observed smoking in places other than the designated areas will be asked to butt out or relocate to one of the two assigned areas.

This new policy comes into effect during National Non-Smoking Week, January 15–21. Included among the goals of the week, an event established in 1977, are education about the dangers of smoking, prevention from beginning to smoke and help for individuals who want to quit smoking.

During the week, which has been given the theme, “Breaking up is hard to do,” SFMH will highlight different methods of smoking cessation that are available. The hospital takes a positive approach by providing support to both patients and staff who express a wish to quit.

In 2006, a partnership was formed with The Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation (OMSC)—a program that provides counselling, educational materials, cessation medication and follow-up support to patients who want to try to kick the habit.

“We’re happy to be able to offer our guidance and support to patients and staff members who want to make this significant change to their lifestyle, and we’re proud of the many successful ‘quits’ we’ve had,” says SFMH RN and coordinator of the program, Joanne Plebon.

Dr. Bruce Harris, Chief of Staff at SFMH echoed this sentiment adding, “Physicians at SFMH are very passionate about smoking cessation as they have witnessed many tragic, preventable deaths due to tobacco use.”

If you would like more information about quitting, visit the www.smokershelpline.ca or call Smokers’ Helpline at 1-877-513-5333.