

MRI Backgrounder

Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (WWLHIN) residents will soon benefit from a new MRI machine. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will provide \$800,000 annually to fund the ongoing operating costs for a new MRI at Cambridge Memorial Hospital (CMH). The funding will allow the MRI to be in operation for eight hours per day, five days per week. An estimated 3,300 patients will be scanned each year, saving thousands from the drive to other sites including Kitchener, Guelph and Hamilton.

The Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation will raise the \$4 million for the purchase, renovation and installation of the MRI machine as part of its strategic campaign plan for this year.

MRI is a non-invasive and radiation-free technology that uses a magnetic field and radio waves to produce detailed pictures of the organs, soft tissues, bone and virtually all other internal body structures. It is regularly relied upon by physicians to diagnose a wide variety of conditions including breast cancer, tumors, damage caused by a heart attack or disease and sports-related injuries to muscles and ligaments.

CMH currently has MRI qualified radiologists and technologists to support this important clinical service. The CMH radiologists bring advanced MRI expertise to support specialty MRI exams not currently being performed in this LHIN.

The MRI at CMH will support the acute care clinical programs and provide timely exams and diagnostic support for clinicians to treat their patients. CMH will provide cardiac MRI exams for WWLHIN residents. Cardiac magnetic resonance is useful in the early diagnosis and evaluation of cardiac abnormalities and provides a less invasive and risky diagnostic procedure for some patients.

Breast MRI is very useful in the diagnosis and monitoring of therapy in conjunction with mammography. CMH currently performs over 6,000 mammograms per year and many women are required to travel to Guelph or Hamilton for breast MRI and wait for up to three months for this test. The MRI at CMH will provide timely access to early breast cancer diagnosis and treatment for these patients.

MRI access to CMH will eliminate the need to transfer patients for evaluation of cord compression either through trauma or cancer of the spinal cord. CMH has a very busy emergency service and oncology program that will benefit from this service on site.

The current wait time for MRI exams in our LHIN is 98 days at Grand River Hospital and 44 days at Guelph General Hospital. These wait times are significantly greater than the Ontario Ministry Wait Time Target of 28 days for this clinically important diagnostic test. The new MRI service at CMH will assist all residents of the WWLHIN by reducing the wait times at not only CMH but the other LHIN hospitals as well.

CMH will need to do renovations to prepare a new MRI suite for this technology. The siting of the unit is designed to maximize efficiencies with existing Diagnostic Imaging Services and is closely located to both the Emergency and Intensive Care units. The plan for construction will begin immediately with the first patient being scanned within the next 12-15 months.

The WWLHIN has a population of 730,000 residents and is projected to be the sixth fastest growing LHIN in the province in the coming years. CMH serves a population of 140,000, providing a wide range of acute care clinical services. There are currently three MRI scanners in WWLHIN. Improving wait times for MRI exams is one of eight strategic priorities of the Waterloo Wellington LHIN Integrated Health Service Plan. An additional MRI resource at CMH will provide the health system, both locally and provincially, with better local care.

For more information regarding the MRI, contact:

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