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Hospital postpones 57 surgical procedures over two days

Residue found on some surgical instruments, low risk to patients

LETHBRIDGE — Alberta Health Services (AHS) has postponed 57 surgeries and medical procedures over a two-day period at Chinook Regional Hospital after a fine dark residue was found on some surgical instruments.

Most elective surgeries and procedures were postponed Wednesday and today.

Emergency surgeries and certain elective surgeries are continuing using surgical equipment from other AHS sites.

The residue appeared following cleaning and sterilization of surgical equipment used in operating rooms and day procedures. In consultation with infection prevention and control specialists, Dr. Karin Goodison, South Zone Medical Officer of Health, has determined the residue presents a low risk to patient safety.

“The chemical and biological markers for the level of cleaning and sterility for our instruments continues to meet Canadian standards,” says Dr. Goodison. “We took the proactive approach of postponing scheduled surgeries because patient safety is a top priority and we take this situation very seriously.”

Sean Chilton, Chief Zone Officer for AHS South Zone, says postponed surgeries and procedures will be rescheduled as soon as possible. Patients are being contacted about rebooking dates.

“We sincerely apologize and we understand postponing surgeries is stressful and inconvenient to our patients,” says Chilton.

Water systems and medical device processing equipment at CRH are being tested. Surgical equipment will not be cleaned and sterilized at Chinook Regional Hospital until the situation is resolved. Until then, the hospital will send equipment to other AHS facilities to be cleaned and sterilized and returned to Lethbridge.

“We are working to a full resolution of this issue as quickly as possible. But it’s possible more surgical procedures may need to be postponed until we have fixed the problem,” says Chilton.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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