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Newly recruited physician now practising in High Prairie

Residents have increased access to primary health care services

HIGH PRAIRIE — Alberta Health Services (AHS) is making progress on its goal to increase access to primary care services in High Prairie with the arrival of a new family physician.

Dr. Nader Elhsaeri is a general practitioner who began practising in the community earlier this month. He will be providing care at the AHS Community Health and Wellness Clinic when it opens next month. Until then, he is practising at the Associate Medical Clinic and also providing consistent, ongoing care at the High Prairie Health Complex emergency department.

“I chose to move to High Prairie when I heard about the Community Health and Wellness Clinic being created. This clinic operates under principles I share as a physician,” says Dr. Elhsaeri.

A second newly recruited physician, Dr. (Matsobane) Alpheus Ntsoane, is expected to begin practising in High Prairie before the end of the year.

“The arrival of two family physicians in High Prairie shows recruitment efforts by the Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services, municipal leaders, and our local and area partners are effective in bringing health care professionals to northern Alberta communities,” says Pearl Calahasen, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake.

“It’s a pleasure to welcome these physicians to the community and I’m confident they will both play a significant role in improving access to primary care services for residents.”

High Prairie’s Community Health and Wellness Clinic will offer a range of primary care, public health, and inter-professional health care services in one location.

Building on current health services and local health care needs, the inter-professional team will include physician, nursing, dietary, exercise therapy, social work, addiction/mental health, aboriginal liaison and public health support.

“These new physicians have indicated they were drawn to High Prairie in a large part due to the newly developed Community Health and Wellness Clinic. Their recruitment provides significant support in ensuring ongoing consistent Emergency Department coverage by physicians,” says Dr. Kevin Worry, Medical Director for AHS North Zone. “The Clinic will continue to help recruit and retain physicians that previously may not have come to High Prairie.”

“I’m looking forward to working with Dr. Elhsaeri,” adds Dr. Wayne Chuang, Medical Director of the Community Health and Wellness Clinic. “He is committed to providing patient- and family-centred care, and will be a valuable member of the local care team.”

Dr. Richard Ibach, Associate Zone Medical Director for High Prairie with AHS, credits Calahasen, Mayor Linda Cox and Ken Matthews, Reeve for the Municipal District of Big Lakes, for supporting recruitment efforts.

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“The recent recruitment of two physicians, who have an interest in providing quality care through a team-based model, demonstrates that with support from local community members and stakeholders, the Community Health and Wellness Clinic can attract physicians to High Prairie,” says Dr. Ibach.

AHS has three North Zone physician resource planners who identify and pursue physician recruitment opportunities. They also work closely with various community partners and organizations in northern Alberta, such as the Rural Physician Action Plan, Health Advisory Councils, and independent community physician recruitment and retention committees.

“It’s important that High Prairie and area residents have timely access to family physicians,” says Matthews, who’s also Chair of the AHS Lesser Slave Lake Health Advisory Council. “Our residents are engaged and doing everything they can to work together with AHS to support the health care system. I’ve had the opportunity to meet Dr. Elhsaeri and he will be a great addition to our community.”

Adds Mayor Cox: “High Prairie residents are very involved in local health care. I will continue to bring their health care concerns forward to Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta.”

Dr. Elhsaeri says he enjoys playing soccer and swimming in his spare time, and would like to learn how to ski.

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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