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Surgical capacity continues to expand in Innisfail

Innisfail Health Centre now offers plastic, retinal surgical services

INNISFAIL – New day surgery services are available starting this month at the Innisfail Health Centre to serve residents in central Alberta.

Carpal tunnel surgery, breast reductions/augmentations and tendon repairs can now be performed at the local Alberta Health Services (AHS) facility with the addition of a plastic surgery program, which launched earlier this month. The program runs seven days a month, serving patients from across AHS Central Zone.

The ophthalmology program at the facility is expanding to include surgeries to repair detached or damaged retinas. These surgeries will be offered one day per month, starting Feb. 19.

“The expansion of surgical capacity in Innisfail is great news for central Alberta residents,” says Stephen Mandel, Minister of Health. “Making better use of the capacity in a facility like this, and serving people nearer to where they live, are exactly the kinds of changes we want to see based on the input we’ve had so far to the Rural Health Review.”

“The addition of plastic surgery and retinal surgical services will mean reduced wait times and greater access to care,” adds Kerry Towle, MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Suzanne Telford, Site Manager at the Innisfail Health Centre, says expanded surgical services will benefit not just Innisfail, but all central Alberta

“Increasing our surgical capacity here provides a valuable service to our community and helps us in working to decrease wait times for patients,” Telford says. “Adding these programs also means we’re able to offer these fairly specialized services closer to home for patients who might otherwise have to travel to larger centres.”

The retinal surgery service complements the existing local retina clinic and ophthalmology program, which launched in 2013. Innisfail has been a part of a surgical capacity increase that began in AHS Central Zone in 2010, when the ophthalmology program moved here from Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre to free up operating room time there for more complex emergent and elective surgeries.

“Our ophthalmology program serves a wide variety of eye health conditions, such as glaucoma, vision loss, retinal issues and cataracts,” says Telford. “We do a large number of cataract surgeries here and we are continuing to see more as we are now able to do more complex procedures that require general anesthetic.”

Once fully implemented, nearly 100 retinal surgeries could be performed every year at the Innisfail Health Centre. About 450 required and elective procedures will be completed annually through the plastic surgery program.

More staff and new equipment have been added to support the expansion of surgical services.

The equipment includes an operating table, an anesthetic machine, a cautery machine, additional surgical instruments and a nerve stimulator. A number of the purchases were made possible by donations through the Red Deer Regional Health Foundation and annual fundraising initiatives, such as the Cattle Round Up and staff 50/50 lotto.

“Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre serves patients from across the zone, so any time we can help provide equipment in other facilities that helps relieve pressure on the hospital and allows people to access services closer to home, it’s a win-win situation,” says Iaian Park, Executive Director of the Red Deer Regional Health Foundation.

“Being able to support sites in purchasing equipment to expand or enhance their services benefits the whole zone.”

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 care system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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