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Three Hills Health Centre welcomes portable X-ray unit

New machine allows images to be taken at bedside in critical situations

THREE HILLS — A new portable X-ray machine has brought diagnostic imaging to the bedside for many patients at Three Hills Health Centre.

The portable unit, which went into operation in late June, is the first of its kind in Three Hills. Unlike the facility's existing X-ray unit — a stationary device which requires patients to be brought to the diagnostic imaging department — the \$50,000 portable machine is much smaller and fully mobile.

“This is an excellent addition to the services we provide in Three Hills,” says Ruth Wold, site manager of Three Hills Health Centre.

“There are times when we may be unable to move a patient to the X-ray unit due to their condition. Being able to bring the portable X-ray machine to these patients means we can capture images right where the patient is. That helps us diagnose patients and determine how best to care for that patient quickly.”

The portable X-ray unit will be used to diagnose trauma patients, helping to identify a number of conditions including internal bleeding, damage to the lungs and ensuring proper placement of chest tubes. With its compact design, it's easily positioned by the technologist to perform X-ray exams of pediatric patients as well as patients who are acutely ill or in palliative care.

While aiding in the diagnosis and treatment at the facility, the portable X-ray unit won't replace the stationary X-ray machine, which will continue to be used in cases where patients can safely be transported, and in cases involving broken bones, spinal or head injuries.

“The comfort of patients is always a key factor,” says Dr. Adina McBain, Facility Medical Director. “The fewer times they have to be transported the better.”

Being able to bring the portable X-ray machine to patients also allows physicians to continue monitoring patients while the images are being collected, adds McBain.

The Three Hills Health Initiative, through the David Thompson Health Trust, covered all costs of the equipment, with generous support from the community. The majority of funds were raised during an evening gala held last November, with other donor support provided year-round.

“We have a really supportive community that go above and beyond for our health care, and I'm really proud to be part of such a caring group of people,” says Al Campbell, chair of the Three Hills Health Initiative.

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