

November 2, 2015

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AHS cyclotron repairs continue

Confirmation of cyclotron downtime for at least another week; urgent scans proceeding

EDMONTON – Alberta Health Services' (AHS) cyclotron will be down for seven to 10 additional days, as engineers work to get the machine back up and running.

In the meantime, AHS continues to source material from other provinces in order to provide as many PET/CT scans as possible. Urgent scans are continuing, and about 70 per cent of AHS' normal patient scan volume is being completed.

This is a longer delay than what was anticipated. AHS is taking every possible step to fix the cyclotron and return it to service as soon as possible to ensure safe production of the materials and staff safety.

PET/CT scans continue to be scheduled according to urgency as determined by AHS radiologists. AHS will contact patients prior to any postponement of a PET/CT scan. The cyclotron outage only affects PET/CT imaging, which is one specialized test. All other scans, including regular CT scans, are not affected and appointments are being held as scheduled.

The cyclotron is a complex device that requires significant precision of parts placement. The repairs require significant testing with no allowable margin of error. The repair work is also occurring in a radioactive environment, and workers are limited to the amount of exposure they can incur, which is a factor in the time it is taking for repairs.

Once the cyclotron is repaired, AHS anticipates being able to clear the backlog of patients in three to four weeks by operating into the evenings and on weekends.

Information about the issue has been updated on the Beyond the Headlines section of AHS' website: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Blogs/BTH/default.aspx>.

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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