

February 5, 2014

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Renovations begin at local emergency department

ED will continue to care for patients during 40-month improvement project

LETHBRIDGE – A major renovation will increase space and improve privacy for patients in the emergency department at Chinook Regional Hospital.

The \$9-million renovation project began this week and will extend over a period of 40 months, ending in 2017.

“The reason the emergency project is going to take so long is we’re trying to limit the impact to patients,” says Teri Myhre, Vice President of Acute Care West, Alberta Health Services (AHS) South Zone. “We can’t close our emergency department – that’s just not realistic. Instead, we’ve broken the project into five smaller phases so we can continue to function and care for patients.”

Phase 1 involves renovation to some patient and office areas. Patient space has been added temporarily adjacent to the day procedures area, so the reduction in space during construction is minimal. Prior to the launch of the project, some regular emergency department services were moved, including the casting clinic, which is now located in the auxiliary wing adjacent to the community lab.

A new waiting room and triage area is being constructed in an area previously occupied by the respiratory department, which has moved to another part of the hospital. This new waiting room will be located near current waiting area. It will be completed in April.

Overall, the project will increase the current emergency department space by at least a third, adding patient space; dividing waiting areas into two, one for rapid assessment; and creating dedicated private rooms for gynecology treatment, trauma, psychiatry services, and improved infection prevention and control. Patient privacy will be significantly enhanced.

“We expect our wait times to see a physician will increase at times during this project,” says Dr. Peter Kwan, Chief of Emergency at Chinook Regional Hospital. “It’s one of the reasons we want to urge those in our community to use the emergency department wisely.

“This is going to be especially important during construction because there will be times when that work might temporarily reduce the size of our treatment areas. We’re going to do the best we can and we’re simply asking the community to consider other options besides the emergency department for care when appropriate.”

Individuals can call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-5465 to determine if the emergency department is the place to seek care for their health concerns. More than one in four people in AHS emergency departments could have their health concerns managed in a more appropriate setting, such as a family doctor’s office or walk-in clinic.

AHS encourages Albertans to consider other options, such as primary care clinics, pharmacies, and Health Link Alberta, before visiting an emergency department.

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The Emergency Department renovation is part of the \$128-million capital redevelopment project funded by the Government of Alberta. The overall project includes construction of a new 19,000-square-metre wing that will expand acute and ambulatory care, outpatient clinics, respiratory therapy, pre-operative assessment, and labour and delivery.

A media availability is scheduled for today at 1:00 p.m. with Dr. Peter Kwan and Diane Shanks, Director of Emergency. Plans and drawings of the Emergency Department renovation will be available. Media will meet at the north end of the Chinook Regional Hospital atrium.

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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