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Day procedures unit bigger, brighter and better for patients

LETHBRIDGE – More and different procedures are now being performed at Chinook Regional Hospital's newly renovated day procedures unit, which is bigger, brighter and offers patients improved comfort and privacy.

The two-year renovation project – which is part of the hospital's \$128-million redevelopment – nearly doubles the unit's space to more than 1,100 square metres, creates larger treatment spaces, adds two endoscopy rooms, and increases the number of recovery spaces from 13 to 18.

“A larger day procedures unit at Chinook Regional Hospital will provide immediate benefits to this growing community, and free up capacity in other areas of the hospital,” says Fred Horne, Minister of Health. “The Government of Alberta's continued investment in Chinook Regional will benefit both current and future residents of this growing community.”

The new day procedures unit is now home to procedures such as pacemaker implants, formerly performed in an operating room; bronchoscopy, used to view a patient's airways and lungs, formerly performed in the intensive care unit and diagnostic imaging; and endoscopies used to diagnose and treat conditions of the bile ducts and main pancreatic duct, such as gallstones, formerly done in the diagnostic imaging unit.

“We've added significantly more space and new equipment allowing us to take on procedures that are usually completed in other parts of the hospital. This is freeing up time and space pressures in those other departments,” says unit manager Pam Dooper.

“We are also hearing very positive comments from patients. They say it's amazing to have so much natural light coming into the recovery area.”

Adds surgeon Dr. Tony Gomes: “There is more room for patients; it's much more comfortable and more private as well. We have more procedure rooms and that means more opportunities for growth in the future to provide more and different procedures.”

About 12,000 procedures are performed every year on the unit, including minor surgeries, endoscopy, cystoscopy (examination of the bladder) and cataract procedures.

The renovated unit brings immediate benefit to patients.

Internal medicine specialist Dr. Aaron Low says the larger surgical space inside the unit allows him greater flexibility in scheduling procedures, such as implanting pacemakers. He performs about 15 implants per month.

“Previously we had to schedule time in an operating room. Because of other surgeries or emergency cases, patients sometimes had to have pacemakers implanted at night to avoid scheduling conflicts,” says Dr. Low.

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“With access to a surgical space inside Day Procedures, I can implant pacemakers any day of the week and, after recovery and testing, most pacemaker patients can return home the same day.”

New equipment is also improving patient care and safety.

Large, adjustable monitors in each new procedure room give the physicians and staff clear views of their work. A low radiation portable X-ray allows patients to be scanned without leaving the unit, reducing patient stress and saving time.

The day procedures renovation was split into three phases; the first involving demolition and rebuilding of the former Lethbridge Cancer Centre. As construction moved inward, sections of the unit were closed off while physicians and nurses continued to care for patients.

“The last phase of the construction was the most challenging because we had to reduce the number of beds and procedure rooms during the construction but everyone pulled together,” says Dooper. “Staff and physicians adapted and everyone gave 120 per cent to support the patients.”

The hospital redevelopment project is slated for completion in 2017.

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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