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AHS cyclotron returns to full operation

Additional PET/CT scans to be performed to clear patient backlog

EDMONTON – Alberta Health Services' (AHS) cyclotron has returned to full service following a four-week shutdown due to mechanical issues.

The cyclotron is running at full capacity and began the safe production of fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) on Friday, which is required for PET/CT imaging.

AHS has begun rescheduling 65 patients who were awaiting new appointments, as well as booking about 300 patients who are waiting for their first appointments. They will be booked based on urgency as determined by our radiologists. AHS plans to clear the backlog in three to four weeks by providing additional scans each day and on weekends.

AHS thanks patients for their understanding and commends staff for working hard to provide service to as many patients as possible; approximately 70 per cent of normal patient scan volumes were able to be completed during the shutdown using material sourced from other provinces.

The mechanical issue with the cyclotron only affected PET/CT imaging, which is one specialized test. All other scans, including regular CT scans, were not affected.

The postponements were due to equipment failure of the cyclotron device used to produce the FDG, located at the Edmonton PET Centre, AHS' supplier of FDG. To ensure no further shortages of FDG, AHS is actively working with Alberta Health for both short- and long-term options for redundancy and future mitigation in the event of prolonged cyclotron downtimes.

PET/CT scans provide detailed images of cell function in the body and are used to diagnose many types and stages of cancer, epilepsy and dementia.

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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