Pembroke Regional Hospital Advances Imaging Capabilities With Investment In New Nuclear Imaging Equipment

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PEMBROKE – A significant investment in the field of Nuclear Medicine will allow the Pembroke Regional Hospital to advance its imaging services and increase diagnostic capabilities.

Recently, the hospital invested approximately one million dollars in a state-of-the-art Nuclear Medicine machine to replace the one that has served the Nuclear Medicine department for the past 15 years.

Nuclear medicine is a branch of medical imaging that uses a radioactive product called a tracer to check how well organs and tissues function within the body. Most often, this type of diagnostic test is used to show the presence and/or the extent of a disease or condition.

Nuclear Medicine specialist Dr. Christopher O'Brien explained that the newly purchased system can better evaluate and characterize cancer or heart disease through improved imaging techniques.

With additional features, he said the new technology further enhances the hospital's cardiac assessment program. "With this addition, we will be able to further build on our risk assessment capabilities, giving patients a more complete understanding of their cardiac status in order to make more informed decisions about their health," Dr. O'Brien said.

Dr. O'Brien said the new equipment will also be able to further help patients who have orthopaedic issues by combining the very sensitive Nuclear Medicine functional imaging with a highly accurate CT for a single stop assessment. This will benefit patients who have knee and hip replacements as well as those with other bone and joint disorders.

The new Nuclear Medicine machine will also:

- Have a significant impact on the management of cancer patients as it can more accurately assess and localize the spread of cancer resulting in the best treatment at an earlier stage of disease.

- More accurately assess patients for blood clots in the lung through a specialized scan which is a very accurate and safe procedure to determine the presence of pulmonary embolism. This technique has also been shown to be very helpful in evaluating blood clots in those patients who have COVID.

Diagnostic Imaging Director Laurie Menard said the new machine went into service at the end of March following a seven-week pause for the removal and installation of equipment. Since then, the department has ramped back up to full service.

Ms. Menard said the hospital relied on the expertise of staff, radiologists and our Nuclear Medicine specialist as part of the equipment evaluation, selection and purchase processes and they worked with the hospital's information technology and maintenance teams, as well as external partners, to ensure that the downtime had minimal impact on patient care.

Katie Fadock, the hospital's Nuclear Medicine Technologist and Radiation Safety Officer who played a key role in the selection process noted that, in addition to some of the enhanced service features, the new system and software also allows for additional radiation dose reduction without image quality compromise, generally quicker scan times and streamlined imaging processing.

The system is also more ergonomic for the technologist and allows for efficient transition between patients. She noted that some training on the new equipment is ongoing, with plans to receive specialized training on the new cardiac features from the vendor this month.

"It's been a long 12-month process from RFP (Request For Proposal) to install - but so worth it! This community is so fortunate to have this level of diagnostics in their backyard," Ms. Fadock said.

PRH President and CEO Pierre Noel praised the team and acknowledged the work that it took in order to complete this much-needed purchase.

"Nuclear Medicine, like many diagnostic modalities, continues to advance in terms of the technology used, so despite the fact we were due for an upgrade, it was worth it to take the time, evaluate our options and invest in the best technology available," Mr. Noel said, adding that, in 2021-2022 alone, the PRH Diagnostic Imaging department performed 938 nuclear medicine scans.

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