

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Friday, April 19, 2013**

## **Heart Investigation Unit to provide care for cardiac patients closer to home**

Beginning this week, the first of more than 1,000 patients expected to receive cardiac catheterization testing over the next year will be cared for at Niagara's new regional Heart Investigation Unit (HIU).

Boasting 7,000 square feet at the recently opened St. Catharines Site of the Niagara Health System (NHS) the unit is projected to provide 1268 diagnostic procedures during the 2013/2014 year at the state-of-the-art centre.

The HIU is the latest service enhancement in the evolution of the regional cardiology program in Niagara which includes a Coronary Care Unit and a Cardiac Rapid Assessment Clinic, and will provide much-needed cardiac diagnostic care closer to home for the community.

The new unit will bring together specialists in Niagara and Hamilton through a partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) enabling the hospital to provide quality, safe, expert care closer to home. The two organizations are committed to a vision of one regional and integrated program delivered at two sites with specialist physicians providing services in both Hamilton and Niagara.

The introduction of HIU services at the St. Catharines Site will be staged over an eight week period. The program will continue to evolve over time to provide interventional care, such as the insertion of stents. Among services provided in the HIU is cardiac catheterization, a new service in Niagara which includes procedures to diagnose and assess the severity of cardiac disease and evaluate the suitability of a patient for angioplasty, surgery, and other therapy or interventions.

In the past, all cardiac catheterization procedures were performed at Hamilton General Hospital's Heart Investigation Unit. Twenty per cent of the patients seen at Hamilton's cardiac catheterization program last year were Niagara residents. While many patients will now be able to receive care in Niagara, in some instances, patients with more complex needs, will continue to go to Hamilton for services. Opened in 2005, the 32-bed HIU at HHS is the largest centre in Ontario, with four state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization laboratories.

This model is in keeping with the Local Health Integration Network's strategic direction of dramatically improving the patient experience by integrating service delivery and is part of the LHIN's larger plan to create a regional system of care across the Hamilton, Brant, Burlington, Haldimand and Niagara communities.

### **QUOTES:**

"Bringing this much-needed service to Niagara will reduce the need for many patients to leave the region for care. We are excited about our partnership with the team at Hamilton Health Sciences, and we are so pleased to be able to offer new and enhanced cardiac care services to our community."  
Susan Kwolek, Vice President, Patient Services, St. Catharines Site, Niagara Health System

## **Heart Investigation Unit to provide care for cardiac patients closer to home**

“With heart disease being a top health concern, everyone in the region stands to benefit from the expansion of our cardiology services in addition to the clinical expertise and latest technology the HIU has to offer.” Dr. Sven Pallie, Chief, Cardiology, Niagara Health System

“We’re very proud of this collaboration between Hamilton Health Sciences and the Niagara Health System,” said Dr. Madhu Natarajan, interventional cardiologist at Hamilton Health Sciences and regional physician lead for the HHS-NHS Integrated Heart Investigation Unit. “Together, we’ve created an unique program that will deliver an enhanced system of cardiac care to those who need it closer to home. The addition of this new diagnostic service and the ongoing partnership between HHS and NHS is a great step towards providing the best cardiac care possible to the Niagara region.”

### **What is cardiac catheterization?**

Cardiac catheterization is recommended when a partial or complete arterial blockage is suspected. This diagnostic procedure is used to evaluate how well the heart is functioning and to obtain information about blockages. The procedure is performed in the hospital and usually takes two to three hours.

For more information on Niagara Health System’s cardiology program:

<http://www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/cardiac-services>

### **About Niagara Health System:**

The Niagara Health System (NHS) is Ontario's largest multi-site hospital amalgamation comprised of six sites serving 434,000 residents across the 12 municipalities making up the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Locations include: Douglas Memorial Site in Fort Erie; Greater Niagara General Site in Niagara Falls; Niagara-on-the-Lake Site; Port Colborne Site; St. Catharines Site; and Welland Site. The NHS provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient clinics/services at the six sites, including Acute Care, Surgical Care, Emergency and Urgent Care, Kidney Care, Complex Care, Mental Health and Addiction, Long Term Care and Cancer Care. The NHS has 4,228 employees, 624 physicians and 1,100 volunteers, with an annual operating budget of approximately \$415 million (based on fiscal 2011-12).

### **About Hamilton Health Sciences:**

Hamilton Health Sciences is a family of six unique hospitals, a cancer centre and an urgent care centre, serving more than 2.3 million residents of Hamilton and central west Ontario, Canada. Hamilton Health Sciences is one of the largest hospital groups in Ontario, and serves as a regional referral centre for cardiac, stroke, burns, trauma, neurosurgery, pediatrics, digestive diseases, high-risk obstetrics, cancer, orthopedics and rehabilitation services. With a staff of over 11,000, the hospital is the largest employer in the Hamilton region. As an academic teaching hospital with more than 1,100 beds and an affiliation with McMaster University and Mohawk College, Hamilton Health Sciences is committed to providing exemplary health care while advancing excellence in education and health research. The organization’s exceptional track record of inquiry and innovation has earned it recognition as one of the world’s leading health science research organizations.

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