



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

Life-saving interventional cardiac care available for first time in Niagara

Niagara Health System's regional Cardiac Care Program has begun providing a vital service for the first time in the region: Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI). The program's Heart Investigation Unit (HIU) has evolved over the past year to now provide interventional care, or the insertion of stents, in addition to diagnostic care, or cardiac catheterization.

The specialized team in the HIU is projecting to complete more than 540 PCI cases in 2014/2015. Prior to April 1, patients requiring this type of procedure had to travel outside of the region for care. The introduction of interventional care is a large step forward as the NHS continues to build its program and develop comprehensive cardiac services for the residents of Niagara.

PCI 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. The HIU in Niagara was created through a partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences and enables NHS 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 PCI will provide much-needed cardiac interventional care closer to home for the community. Almost 1,300 cardiac care patients had access to diagnostic procedures for the first time in Niagara with the opening of the HIU one year ago. The cardiac care program has tripled the number of cardiologists on its team in a short 16 months.

The introduction of PCI services at the St. Catharines Site will be staged over time as the team builds capacity for complex cases. The HIU already provides cardiac catheterization, 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.

Previously, interventional care was only provided at Hamilton General Hospital's Heart Investigation Unit (Hamilton Health Sciences). In the last fiscal year (2013/2014) more than 650 patients had to travel to Hamilton from Niagara for the procedure. 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 care.

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

QUOTES:

"We are so pleased to be able to offer new and enhanced cardiac care services to our community. Our specialized cardiac care team is now able to provide both diagnostic and interventional care in one location, reducing the need for many patients to leave the region for care. Together, we've created a unique program with the team at Hamilton Health Sciences, enabling us to deliver an enhanced system of cardiac care to those who need it closer to home." Derek McNally, Executive Vice President, Clinical Services, Niagara Health System

"Many patients and their families will benefit from the expansion of cardiology services in Niagara, including the clinical expertise and latest technology the HIU has to offer. The strong partnership and integration with our colleagues in Hamilton allows us to think big and dream even bigger, for the patients in our region." Dr. Jaffer Syed, Interventional Cardiologist, Physician Lead Niagara Site HIU, Niagara Health System and Associate Professor of Medicine, McMaster University

"We're very pleased that Niagara's HIU is already in a position to expand its services to include interventional procedures. This is indicative of NHS's commitment to innovation and to providing great cardiac care to the people of Niagara. Our ongoing partnership will ensure that, no matter how complex their needs, all cardiac patients in our Region will be very well served." Dr. Madhu Natarajan, interventional cardiologist at Hamilton Health Sciences, Regional Physician lead for the HHS-NHS Integrated Heart Investigation Unit and Professor of Medicine, McMaster University

What is Percutaneous Coronary Intervention?

Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) is a non-surgical procedure that uses a catheter to place a small structure called a stent to open up blood vessels in the heart that have been narrowed by plaque buildup, a condition known as atherosclerosis. PCI improves blood flow, thus decreasing heart-related chest pain (angina), making you feel better and increasing your ability to be active.

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 a 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 4,195 employees, 621 physicians and 1,100 volunteers, with an annual operating budget of approximately \$468 million (based on fiscal 2013-14).

About Hamilton Health Sciences:

Hamilton Health Sciences is a family of seven unique hospitals, a cancer centre, a rehabilitation centre and an urgent care centre, serving more than 2.3 million residents of Hamilton and south central 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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