

Headwaters updates diagnostic services as it addresses backlog

By Paula Brown

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) has announced updates to diagnostic imaging services at the local hospital amidst plans to address backlog.

The local hospital issued a press release on April 7, providing an update on how they plan to deal with waitlists for diagnostic imaging procedures brought on by the pandemic.

“There are many appointments that have needed to be rescheduled, and we have a plan in place to do that,” said Anna-Marie Sutherland, Vice President, Patient Experience, Health Integration and Chief Nursing and Health Disciplines Executive. “We are working closely with physicians' offices to ensure that patients are reassured they haven't been forgotten and that appointments are being scheduled as quickly as possible.”

Headwaters' plan to address the backlog includes extending operating days and hours, hiring additional staff to ensure full shift coverage, and enhancing their booking system efficiency.

“While we know that waiting for an appointment at Headwaters or seeking service elsewhere is a personal choice, best made in consultation with a specialist, we will do everything we can to ensure that our patients health care needs are met in a timely fashion,” said Sutherland.

Jennifer Hamilton, director of communications and stakeholder relations at HHCC, said there is an estimated 2,700 exams on the waitlist for mammograms, ultrasounds, CT and bone mineral density at the hospital.

“This is not a unique patient number as some patients may require more than one exam,” said Hamilton.

Headwaters Hospital has also received a number of new diagnostic imaging equipment, which they said will enhance their ability to provide services.

The new diagnostic equipment includes a thyroid update system, which helps diagnose concerns with the thyroid; a newly installed mammography machine with advanced imaging capability to improve breast screening; and two new ultrasound machines that are now in steady use.

Hamilton said the wait times for non-urgent scheduled appointment vary from three to twelve weeks depending on the procedure. She noted that ultrasound and mammography appointments have the longest wait times while CT scans have the shortest.

There is no waitlist for nuclear medicine and x-ray procedures.

“We appreciate the patience and support our community has shown throughout the pandemic. Our staff have continued to work hard to provide the excellent health care we are known for and will continue to do so as we address the lingering effects of the pandemic on our services,” said Sutherland.