

Health region to upgrade imaging equipment

Janet French

The StarPhoenix

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

The Saskatoon Health Region will spend \$2.9 million purchasing and upgrading diagnostic imaging equipment, thanks to funding announced Monday by Saskatchewan Health.

The Health Department handed out \$4.8 million to six health regions to help upgrade diagnostic imaging equipment across the province and replace aging equipment.

Health regions are preparing for a new system that will make X-rays and CT and MRI scans available digitally.

The province is implementing the \$35-million Radiology Information System and Picture Archiving Communication System by the end of the year in Saskatoon and Regina, and in six smaller cities by 2008.

These systems will make digital images available to health-care workers across the province.

The Saskatoon Health Region is spending \$2.6 million to replace or upgrade equipment so it can produce these digital images. Corey Miller, director of medical imaging services with the region, said the region plans to use the money for a new nuclear medicine camera for Royal University Hospital, two new fluoroscopy machines at St. Paul's Hospital and a new digital X-ray machine for City Hospital. The region will also buy 10 software upgrades to bring existing machines into the age of digital image storage.

Already on order is a \$245,000 ultrasound machine to replace one at RUH that's been in use for a decade, Miller said.

Information technology staff are already installing monitors and computers throughout the hospitals in hopes the digital imaging system will work by April, Miller said.

He hopes health-care workers will be using the system in at least one of Saskatoon's hospitals by June 11, with the other two hospitals following suit within weeks.

"It's going to be great -- not just for the patients, but the staff who work here," Miller said.

Although the new equipment is enough to get diagnostic images digitized across the city, Miller said hospitals will likely need more equipment in the future.

The province says investments in diagnostic imaging are paying off by reducing wait times for some patients. In the 2005-06 fiscal year, Saskatchewan did 22 per cent more MRI exams, 16 per cent more CT scans and 37 per cent more bone mineral density tests as compared to the previous year. MRI wait times have dropped the most dramatically over the past two years, falling 42 per cent.

jfrench@sp.canwest.com

© The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon) 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.