

Media Release

January 22, 2009

Leading-edge technology delivers radiation treatment to cancer patients

The Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario at Kingston General Hospital recently performed its first high dose rate brachytherapy radiation treatment using a new and innovative piece of equipment that results in increased comfort and convenience for patients.

KGH recently purchased the Flexitron High Dose Rate Remote Afterloading System to deliver high dose rate brachytherapy - the first system of its kind to be used in North America.

Brachytherapy is a type of radiation treatment that is delivered internally to a body cavity or tissue, by inserting radioactive isotopes. In Kingston, brachytherapy is commonly used to treat gynecological cancers such as uterine and cervical cancer, and historically used low dose rate isotopes. While highly effective, treatment with low dose rate isotopes took several days to deliver. Using high dose rate isotopes is a faster and more comfortable procedure for patients.

Previously, patients were restricted to a hospital bed for two to three days to receive treatment. This was inconvenient and uncomfortable for patients as well as expensive because several days of hospital care were required.

“High dose rate brachytherapy means patients receive three treatments at weekly intervals and each one takes about 15 minutes,” says Radiation Oncologist Dr. Wendy Shelley. “Now we are able to offer an equally effective treatment with a procedure that can be done as an outpatient. It is much more convenient and comfortable for the patient.”

The Flexitron, which is about the size of a floor polisher, offers several options to customize radiation treatments, including specialized software to calculate the specific dose delivery for each individual patient.

“The Flexitron allows us to deliver radioactive material to the patient safely and accurately,” says Chief Medical Physicist Dr. John Schreiner. “We are very fortunate to be able to use this new technology as it allows greater flexibility in the

way we deliver treatment and gives us the ability to use it for other types of cancer in the future.”

Radiation oncologists and radiation therapists were specially trained to use the new equipment and a treatment room was modified to include the added protection needed to deliver high dose rates of radiation. The dedicated room includes an X-ray machine to help determine accurate placement of radiation.

Affiliated with Queen’s University, Kingston General Hospital is a 456-bed specialized teaching and research hospital that serves more than 500,000 people in southeastern Ontario and is the community hospital for the Kingston area. KGH provides an array of specialized acute and ambulatory clinical services including trauma, cardiac, stroke, pediatric, perinatal, end stage renal and stem cell transplants. Home to the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario, KGH is dedicated to compassionate, high quality health care in a dynamic academic research environment. It features a robust research program and provides hands-on skill training for close to 1,900 health-care students annually. For more information, visit the web site at <http://www.kgh.on.ca> .

Leading Care. Changing Lives.

-30-

Media contacts: Sharon Partridge, KGH Public Affairs, 613-549-6666 ext. 6875 or pager 613-536-7872.

Note to editors: Media are invited to view the Flexitron at 1 p.m.

Media are asked to use the main entrance to the Cancer Centre off King Street (underneath the ER ramp).