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RVH improves access to care for cancer patients

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre's (RVH) has increased access to care for cancer patients requiring radiation therapy with the addition of a fourth radiation machine, called a linear accelerator (LINAC).

“When we opened the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre in 2012, we built a ‘shelled-in’ space to eventually add a fourth radiation treatment unit,” says Nancy Savage, executive vice president, Patient and Family Experience and Regional Vice President Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario). “Last year we treated more than 1,600 patients and with this fourth machine, we will care for 33 per cent more, ensuring patients requiring radiation therapy can receive timely care, closer to home.”

A LINAC is the device most commonly used to treat cancer using high-energy x-rays or electrons to the patient's tumour. RVH's new equipment, co-funded by RVH and Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario), has new advanced capabilities such as a robotic patient support table that can move and rotate in any direction when aligning the patient for treatment, as well as the ability to deliver the radiation faster. These features can be used in special situations where higher precision is required, such as tumours near the spinal cord.

“RVH is committed to delivering safe, high-quality care, in a timely fashion,” says Dr. Christiaan Stevens, medical director, Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Program. “When someone receives a cancer diagnosis they understandably want to get treatment quickly and effectively, and as close to their home as possible. The addition of this state-of-the-art LINAC provides our team with the opportunity to treat more patients, improving access to care for cancer patients across our region.”

RVH's radiation program, which continues to grow, currently consists of nine radiation oncologists, radiation therapists, medical physicists, physics associates, specialized nurses, clerks and electronics technologists.

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In photo: from right, Dr. Christiaan Stevens, medical director, Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Program; Keith Nakonechny, medical physicist, RVH; Brandee Pidgeon, manager, Radiation Treatment & Rotary Lodge, RVH; Kyle Malkoske, head, Physics/Oncology, RVH

Photo by Denise Philpott, RVH

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