

February 25, 2010

## Wait Times to be Reduced Further

### *Two new Emergency Department Support Units Announced*

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services is opening new, specialized *Emergency Department Support Units* at Rockyview General Hospital in Calgary and Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton to reduce wait times and improve access to hospital beds.

A 12-bed *Medical Assessment Unit (MAU)* officially opened at Rockyview General Hospital today. A 12-to-16 bed *MAU* at Royal Alexandra Hospital will open in May.

Patients who require admission to hospital will be transferred to an MAU after they have been assessed, instead of waiting in Emergency. Treatment by non-Emergency Department physicians will continue in the MAU to determine and begin the patient's ongoing care. Opening these new MAU beds takes pressure off of Emergency Departments by freeing up Emergency beds, physicians and other care providers.

Similar capacity-expansion projects will occur at other Emergency Departments in hospitals across the province over the next year.

"After recently visiting several Emergency Departments across Alberta and speaking with health professionals at these hospitals, I saw the challenges that they and their patients face," said Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Gene Zwozdesky, who attended the Rockyview opening. "Today's announcement will help address some of those challenges."

"Our Emergency Departments are regularly backed up. We needed to reduce the number of patients waiting in the EDs for hospital admission so that we can have treatment spaces available for patients who need emergency care," said Dr. Lester Mercuur, Deputy Clinical Department Head, Emergency Medicine, Calgary Zone.

Alberta Health Services identified Emergency Department wait times as a priority in its Performance Measures. The target is to reduce, over the next three years, wait times for complex cases from 16 hours to 8 hours, and from 5.6 hours to 4 hours for less complex cases.

In 2008/2009 there were about 67,000 Emergency Department visits to Rockyview General Hospital and about 62,000 visits to Royal Alexandra Hospital. Across the province, 1.9 million patients were treated in Emergency Departments.

The annual operating cost for the Rockyview General MAU and Royal Alexandra Hospital MAUs will be about \$1.75 million.

Alberta Health Services is responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

For more information, contact:

Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness  
780-427-3665

Don Stewart, Alberta Health Services, Media Relations  
403-943-1210

Howard May, Alberta Health and Wellness, Media Relations  
403-660-1870