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X-ray, ultrasound & CT scans being reviewed in Drumheller

EDMONTON – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is reviewing the cases of 34 patients after interpretation errors were discovered in their diagnostic imaging tests originally read by a radiologist at Drumheller Hospital.

AHS is now contacting all 34 patients and their physicians. The errors in their CT scan interpretations were discovered during a review underway now of 150 CT scans, 50 ultrasounds, and 49 X-rays, originally read by the radiologist over a six-week period this fall.

It is not known at this time how many of the 34 patients might require a change in treatment. The cases are being reviewed in detail now, in consultation with the patients' physicians and independent radiologists reviewing the interpretations. All patients will be notified as the tests are re-read, whether or not there is a recommendation to change treatment.

"We are committed to transparency and immediate disclosure and action any time concerns are raised about quality of care," said Dr. Chris Eagle, AHS President and Chief Executive Officer. "Our physician leaders are taking the right and responsible action – acknowledge when an error has occurred, investigate immediately and keep patients informed as soon as we have information about their care."

As a result of these findings, an expanded review of the physician's interpretations of all CT scans performed at the Drumheller Hospital over the last six months (approximately 1,300 cases) is now underway and cases will be re-read on a prioritized basis.

As a result of the initial findings of the review, the radiologist in question is no longer practicing for AHS or privately and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta has been advised of the review.

Any patient who had diagnostic imaging as part of their care at any time in the past six months in the Drumheller area, which includes Trochu, Three Hills, Hanna and communities within that area, can call an information line supported by Health Link Alberta at 1-866-301-2668 for more information. Diagnostic imaging includes X-ray, ultrasound and CT scans.

"The stress for patients and families created when medical errors occur is very real," said Fred Horne, Minister of Health and Wellness. "While I have no information at this time to suggest that these 34 errors will result in serious patient care issues, Albertans expect and will have assurance that the proper checks and balances are in place when they are having tests read and subsequently receiving medical advice. I apologize to those who have been affected. Later today, I will be making an announcement about additional steps we will take to ensure the accuracy and quality of pathology testing and diagnostic imaging."

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 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.

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