



February 14, 2020

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health
Health Canada
0900C2
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9
hcmister.ministresc@canada.ca

Dear Minister Hajdu:

Re: Wait times for publically funded MRI/CT exams in Alberta

We are writing to express our concerns of wait times for publically funded MRI/CT exams in Alberta. MRI/CT exams are the mainstay investigation tools for cancer diagnosis and without them available a timely diagnosis is impossible. MRI/CT exams are medically necessary services provided by the Alberta Schedule of Medical Benefits that are not meeting the accessibility criterion of the Canada Health Act. The Council of Zonal Leaders (CZL) is a collaboration of the Alberta Medical Association and five Zone Medical Staff Associations to represent matters of joint interest. As physicians practicing in Alberta, we are alarmed by the ominously high wait times for MRI/CT exams that are becoming a significant patient risk issue.

For example, the wait times in Edmonton have resulted in patients waiting longer than before and for more days than in other provinces. Patients are waiting an average of 375 days today for a MRI exam at the University of Alberta Hospital. In our neighbour provinces 50% of patients are waiting 30 days in Saskatchewan and 44 days in British Columbia (CIHI, 2018). Patients are waiting an average of 297 days today for a CT exam at the Leduc Community Hospital. In our neighbour provinces 50% of patients are waiting 17 days in Saskatchewan and 21 days in British Columbia (CIHI, 2018).


Patients do not have adequate access to publically funded MRI/CT exams. Patients are given little option but to pay their own exam fee at a private clinic. This private fee is not reimbursed by the Government of Alberta nor Alberta Health Services. Some family physicians have paid the fee for their critically ill patients who cannot afford the fees. Paying \$375-800 for private fees is not a sustainable option for patients nor in line with the Canada Health Act of accessing medically necessary publically funded health services.

February 14, 2020

Page 2

The CZL aims to work with provincial and federal governments to significantly lower the wait times so patients have access to publically funded exams. We welcome the opportunity to provide further input to resolve the issue. Our patients and the CZL encourage a timely and productive response to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alayne Farries".

Dr. Alayne Farries, Chair
Council of Zonal Leaders

AF/bjh

CC: Dr. Stephen Lucas, Deputy Minister, Health Canada
Mike Gormley, Executive Director, AMA