



February 11, 2020

The Honourable Tyler Shandro
Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Shandro:

Re: Wait times for publically funded MRI/CT exams

We are writing to express our concerns of wait times for publically funded MRI/CT exams. 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. MRI/CT exams are the mainstay investigation tools for cancer diagnosis and without them available a timely diagnosis is impossible. 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).

MRI and CT exam access issues are resulting in higher wait times, inappropriate emergency room visits, higher patient costs and significant patient care concerns due to demand outpacing the publically funded number of exams. The CZL offers support to Alberta Health Services (AHS) to resolve this problem. We encourage initiatives to resolve this issues such as:

- an access strategy;
- sustainable and possible reallocation of funding;
- including MRI and CT exams with your platform commitment of improving elective surgery wait times; and
- managing demand using appropriateness activities and investment.

The CZL aims to work with AHS and the Government of Alberta to significantly lower the number of days patients access an exam. 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,



Dr. Alayne Farries, Chair
Council of Zonal Leaders

AF/bjh

CC: Dr. Verna Yiu, President & CEO, AHS
Lorna Rosen, Deputy Minister of Health
Mike Gormley, Executive Director, AMA