

What is an MRI?

An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a non-invasive diagnostic technique that uses powerful electromagnets, radiofrequency waves, and a computer to produce well-defined images of the body's internal structures. The images depict density differences between normal and diseased tissue.

Why does our community need an MRI?

The MRI is a powerful tool that your family doctor and specialist can use to diagnose many medical conditions. Currently, patients can wait up to 6 months to receive an MRI scan outside of Chatham-Kent. An MRI right in Chatham-Kent means decreased wait times for our patients. With more timely diagnostic information provided by the MRI, the proper treatment can commence earlier and improve the patients' outcome.

What diseases can an MRI detect?

MRI detects a wide variety of medical conditions. Diseases of the central nervous system such as a stroke or the muscular skeletal system such as bone or ligament injury can be readily diagnosed with the MRI. The MRI can also be used for conditions related to the abdomen, cardiovascular system and breast disease, including many forms of cancer.

What's the difference between and MRI, CT Scan or X-rays?

MRI uses radio-waves and strong magnetic fields to generate diagnostic information. CT scanners, like all X-ray equipment, uses ionizing radiation to form an image. The CT and the MRI provide different diagnostic information on the human body. The selection of either MRI or CT depends on the medical condition under investigation.

Where will the MRI be located?

The MRI will be located at the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Grand Ave. Campus in the Diagnostic Imaging Department. The MRI will serve Chatham-Kent and surrounding areas.

How often will an MRI be used?

The MRI will be scheduled for daily use – about 3,000 scans per year. Should the initial hours of operation not address current guidelines for wait times, CKHA will consider expanding the hours of operation.

What will the hours of operation be for the MRI?

Initially, the MRI will operate between the hours of 6:00 am – 4:00 pm, Monday - Friday. Depending on the need, MRI hours of operation may increase in the second year to 10-12 hours per day, Monday – Friday.

Will patients outside of Chatham-Kent benefit from the local MRI?

Yes, patients on waiting lists outside of Chatham-Kent may also benefit from the local MRI. However, MRI appointments will be made based on patient priority need.

Will this lower wait times for local patients?

Installation of the MRI at CKHA will increase the health system's capacity and will reduce wait times for local patients. In addition, patients will have the opportunity to receive diagnostic care closer to home.

Will having an MRI lower the wait times for other diagnostic imaging procedures such as the CT scan and ultrasound?

No. The MRI will add to CKHA's overall diagnostic capabilities; CT and ultrasound have distinct clinical applications independent of the MRI.

How quickly will the results be reported to my physician?

Results turnaround will be like that of other exams - 48 hours for out-patients, 24 hours for in-patients and immediately for urgent/stat orders.

Do C-K residents get any priority over non-residents for this local machine?

Given that the scanner was approved to support C-K utilization, yes. However, like all diagnostic equipment, clinical needs determine the priority of access.

Can a patient at any age be tested with an MRI?

Yes, with a doctor's referral. CKHA's MRI will serve adults and children.

I have no doctor how can I get an MRI? How can anyone get an MRI?

As with all diagnostic imaging tests and procedures, a signed requisition from a physician is mandatory. Area physicians practicing in the local offices, family health teams, group practices, Clinics, ER and in-patients areas can order an MRI where conditions warrant.

When will the MRI be functional?

We expect the MRI to be functional beginning July 1, 2008.

How can the MRI be operating in July if the fundraising efforts are not complete then?

Due to the MRI wait times that our local patients are experiencing, we need to have the MRI in place as soon as possible. Before a campaign is officially launched, a percentage of the overall goal is normally in place prior to the official launch. In the case of the MRI campaign, the operating dollars from the government, the monies brought in from Christmas Wish Tree and other donations coming in on an on-going basis will allow CKHA to begin to operate the MRI in July. Once the MRI is functional, it is imperative that fundraising efforts continue to be a success to achieve the \$3.5 million goal to continue its use.

What kind of training does one need to operate an MRI?

A licensed Technologist in MRI imaging is required to operate an MRI and a certified Radiologist with appropriate training interpret the results.

Does CKHA have the professional technicians to operate the machine?

Yes. CKHA's compliment of professional staff can operate the MRI. However, we are actively recruiting additional physicians and technologists to accommodate the growth in our department and the volume of work the MRI will bring to CKHA.

Do we have enough radiologists to support the operation of an MRI?

By the time the MRI is operational, CKHA will have the necessary radiologists available to interpret results.

How much does it cost per patient for MRI testing?

The cost varies with what area of the body is being tested. The cost of each test falls within Ministry guidelines. Excluding physician fees, CKHA will have about \$1.1 million in expenses to perform about 3,000 tests annually.

Why are we paying for the MRI, why doesn't the Government pay for it?

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care does not purchase pieces of equipment – they remain the responsibility of hospitals. The reimbursement of annual operating costs of an MRI is capped at \$800,000 with additional costs born by the hospital.

Are there any outside potential revenue generating chances for the MRI?

The operators of approved MRIs may bill third parties such as WSIB, out-of-province patients or non-residents of Canada. While these revenues may be retained by the Alliance, they are not large accounts.