



Government of Yukon

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FOR RELEASE #11-058
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Additional hospital staffing to address overcrowding and patients without a family doctor

WHITEHORSE—Whitehorse General Hospital will introduce a two-track emergency department model beginning in July to address increased pressures, and to see patients who do not have a personal physician and have nowhere else to go for non-emergency medical attention.

"With the collaboration of the Yukon Medical Association's emergency physicians group, the hospital and Yukon government, we have found a short-term solution to address an immediate problem brought about by the departure of several special licence physicians and an increase in population," Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart said today.

In the new model, staff will triage patients into one of two different streams from 11 a.m. until 8 p.m., Monday to Friday.

"The first stream will continue to deal with emergencies while the second stream will deal with matters more of a family practice nature," Yukon Medical Association spokesperson Dr. Ken Quong said. "While this walk-in and urgent care model is not a long-term solution to caring for patients without a family doctor, we want to ensure that their most urgent medical needs are met while we continue to aggressively recruit more family doctors to our community."

An additional physician in the emergency department for nine hours a day on weekdays and additional nursing staff will help cover the increased numbers. The two-track model will remain in place over the summer, with monthly evaluations. By the end of the summer, Yukoners can expect three new doctors in the territory.

"We recognize that this situation requires an immediate response and we will do our part to support our health care providers in ensuring all Yukon residents receive health care services," Hart added.

Yukon Hospital Corporation CEO Joe MacGillivray said this will address the situation in the short term, adding that the hospital's recently announced hospital campus facilities study will include looking at increased capacity and enlarged space for the emergency department.

"We know there are increased demands today, and while we hope that things will slow down, we need to be proactive and make plans to address these pressures in the long term," MacGillivray said.

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