

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
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BC Cancer Agency

PROVINCE GAINS NEW CANCER MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

VANCOUVER – For the first time ever, British Columbia will be producing radio tracers at a public facility to enhance the treatment and management of cancer patients.

“The Province is taking a tremendous step forward by establishing a radiopharmaceutical laboratory at the BC Cancer Agency,” said Health Minister George Abbott. “This new facility means that the Province will be set up to independently produce a stable, safe and secure source of radioisotopes used to perform PET/CT scans as well as allow for future expansion of PET/CT scans to other regions of the province.”

Radioisotopes are used to provide accurate pre-treatment detection of cancerous tumours. Currently, the BC Cancer Agency’s Vancouver Centre is home to the province’s only publicly funded PET/CT centre.

Having a cyclotron – a machine that produces isotopes – on site at the Centre of Excellence for Functional Imaging at the Vancouver BC Cancer Agency gives the unique opportunity to not only produce radiopharmaceuticals but also develop new radiotracers to explore the basic biology of cancer. This is a very powerful research tool that allows for greater understanding of cancer biology. The cyclotron will help the BC Cancer Agency to translate research discoveries into clinical practice as quickly as possible improving patient outcomes and putting B.C. on the leading edge of functional imaging research.

Construction of the Radiopharmaceutical Lab is expected to commence within the next few months. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$15.3 million, with the Ministry of Health making available approximately \$13.8 million either directly or through the Provincial Health Services Authority. The balance is being funded through a commitment by the BC Cancer Foundation to raise \$1.5 million in support of this initiative.

“With the establishment of a radiopharmaceutical laboratory, the BC Cancer Agency is moving to the forefront of molecular imaging technology for treatment planning and research,” said Dr. Simon Sutcliffe, president of the BC Cancer Agency.

With new and expensive therapies coming into the market regularly, this expanded capacity will enable the BC Cancer Agency to determine which patients will benefit most, helping make B.C.’s health-care system more sustainable.

“This initiative will help to strengthen research capabilities not only in the BC Cancer Agency but also in other PHSA research programs such as pediatric care,” said PHSA board chair Wynne Powell. “The foresight shown by the Province, as well as the outstanding support by organizations and individuals through the BC Cancer Foundation, reflect key strategic investments in the good health of British Columbians and the public health-care system itself.”

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