



Toronto Western Hospital
University Health Network

MEDIA ADVISORY

Toronto Western Hospital to receive Ontario's first Gamma Knife

New radiosurgery program will treat 300 neuroscience patients annually

(Toronto – June 10, 2004) – A non-invasive radiation therapy machine known as the Gamma Knife – the first ever in Ontario – will treat about 300 neuroscience patients annually at Toronto Western Hospital's Krembil Neuroscience Centre, starting next year. Known for its world-class neuroscience program, Toronto Western Hospital has ordered the province's first Gamma Knife with plans to treat the first patient in summer, 2005.

As a provincial resource, the Leksell Gamma Knife will be used to treat an estimated 300 patients annually for surgically inaccessible arteriovenous malformations, drug-resistant movement disorders, pain, and epilepsy, and brain tumours that are difficult to treat due to size and location.

"This technology will complement the radiation therapy programs and advanced neuroimaging techniques available in Toronto," said Dr. Catherine Zahn, Chief Operating Officer of Toronto Western Hospital. "It will advance our patient care capabilities and contribute to our research and education initiatives. It is the result of a collaborative effort that has included the hospital's neuroscience and radiation medicine programs, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care."

Also known as radiosurgery, the Gamma Knife delivers beams of radiation therapy to targeted areas of the brain. With precision of less than 1 mm, the beams do not damage surrounding normal tissue, which is exposed to little or no radiation. Patients receive the single-dose treatment as a day procedure that is non-invasive, is safer and more comfortable than conventional surgery, and is associated with lower treatment costs.

"We are pleased to support the first gamma knife radiosurgery program at University Health Network. Before today, patients needing this treatment, had to go out of country. Now, more Ontarians will have access to this unique service, without having to travel out of Ontario," said Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has committed \$1.1-million of annual funding to Toronto Western Hospital for the Gamma Knife's operating costs. Private funds are required for \$7-million of capital costs, which includes \$5-million to purchase the Leksell Gamma Knife, and \$2-million for renovations, site preparation, and minor equipment. Currently, approximately 30 Ontario patients are sent to the United States for Gamma Knife treatment each year, costing Ontario more than \$1.1-million annually.

The hospital's radiosurgery program will be delivered in collaboration with the other neuroscience programs at the University of Toronto affiliated hospitals. Multidisciplinary teams of neurosurgeons, neurologists, radiation oncologists, physicists, radiation therapy, and medical imaging specialists will work together to deliver treatment. Teaching and research will be vital aspects of the radiosurgery program, as staff will collaborate with industry to develop new uses for the Gamma Knife, particularly in the areas of epilepsy and movement disorders.

Home to the Krembil Neuroscience Centre, one of the largest combined clinical and research neurological facilities in North America, Toronto Western Hospital also offers a community and population health program and expertise in musculoskeletal health and arthritis. Toronto Western Hospital is one of three hospitals – including Toronto General Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital – that make up University Health Network, a teaching hospital of the University of Toronto.

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