



NEWS RELEASE from Halton Healthcare

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Innovative Procedure Expands Access to MRI Scans for Cardiac Patients at Halton Healthcare

Halton Healthcare recently completed its first Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan of a patient with an implanted cardiac device (defibrillator in this case) at its Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH). Two years in the making, this accomplishment can be attributed to an innovative collaboration between Halton Healthcare's Diagnostic Imaging and Cardiology Departments to develop a special program that safely accommodates cardiac patients with MRI compatible pacemakers and implanted cardiac devices. This new specialized program improves access to this vital diagnostic test for these cardiac patients.

Dr. Saul Valadka, Chief of Diagnostic Imaging at Halton Healthcare notes that MRIs are considered to be the 'gold standard' in imaging for certain conditions. "MRI is the best way to diagnose spinal cord compression, and some neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis. We also use MRI when other tests such as ultrasound and CT Scans have failed to provide sufficient information," says Dr. Valadka. "Up until recently, however, patients with implanted cardiac devices such as pacemakers and defibrillators couldn't have an MRI because their cardiac devices were not compatible."

Dr. Kostas Ioannou, also identified this unmet clinical need in his role as the Electrophysiologist and Director of the Cardiac Device and Arrhythmia Clinic at OTMH. "Up until recently, the strong magnetic field of the MRI could damage the components in these implanted devices, compromising their function and putting the patients at serious risk," explains Dr. Ioannou. "Fortunately, advancing technologies have since provided a wide range of implantable cardiac devices known as 'conditional devices' that are specifically designed to operate in an MRI environment."

"However, even with this new technology, only a handful of healthcare facilities in Ontario offer this procedure," notes Dr. Valadka. "Until now, we had to send our cardiac patients elsewhere for their MRI scans."

"We were determined to leverage this new technology and find a way to provide this essential diagnostic test successfully here at OTMH, where it's closer to home for our patients and where both our Diagnostic Imaging and Cardiology teams could support them seamlessly," adds Dr. Ioannou.

Thanks to tremendous collaboration, the Cardiology and Diagnostic Imaging teams at Halton Healthcare successfully implemented a procedure with stringent safety protocols to provide MRI scans to patients with implanted devices at OTMH in the Spring of 2022. The very first such MRI scan was of a patient with an implanted cardiac defibrillator.

“Our patients and their safety is our number one priority. There are a multitude of rigorous safety checks at each step of patient’s MRI journey. Scanning conditions must be customized for each patient’s device to meet the conditions specified by the device’s manufacturer,” explains Jay Needles, Corporate MRI Lead at Halton Healthcare. “This meticulous and specialized procedure is extremely patient focused. It is performed only on a case by case basis and strictly reserved for patients with implanted conditional devices who absolutely need an MRI.”

“Mere words cannot express my gratitude for the amazing care that I received at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. Although this procedure was brand new, my medical team met the challenge with flying colours - as I knew they would,” notes Karen Day, the first patient to have this procedure at OTMH. “They really went above and beyond to ensure my safety and well-being every step of the way. I’m so grateful to them all and am so glad that I could have this complex procedure at my community hospital, right here in Oakville.”

About Halton Healthcare

Halton Healthcare is an award winning healthcare organization comprised of three community hospitals - Georgetown Hospital, Milton District Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. Together, these hospitals provide healthcare services to more than 325,000 residents in the communities of Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville. Halton Healthcare has been recognized for best practices in a number of patient safety and patient care initiatives as well as being recognized as a recipient of “Canada’s Most Admired Cultures Award in 2021.” For more information, visit www.haltonhealthcare.com.

Backgrounder

- **Pacemakers and implantable cardioverter defibrillators** help regulate someone’s heartbeat when their own heart cannot do so. They are considered vital life supporting devices.
- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)** uses a large magnet and radio waves to look at organs and structures inside the body. They are used to examine the brain and spinal cord and to diagnose a variety of conditions.

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