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**Northern
Cancer Fund**



**Northern
Cardiac Fund**



**Health Sciences
Discovery Fund**

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Funded program offers best outcomes for prostate cancer patients

Regional Cancer Care at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) is providing a new treatment option for prostate cancer patients. To enable the new procedure, new medical equipment was required. A \$40,000 grant, provided by the Northern Cancer Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation and the D. Elaine Andison Foundation helped purchase the required ultrasound equipment and related probes, catheters and patient care items for the Operating Room Brachytherapy Suite.

The Northern Cancer Fund is committed to the fight against cancer in Northwestern Ontario. "We work to enable excellence in cancer care for everyone in our region," says Ken Bittle, Chair of the Health Sciences Foundation Board of Directors. "Thanks to support from our community, prostate cancer patients in our region have access to the new procedures and technologies that are saving lives," he says.

The new procedure is High Dose Rate (HDR) prostate brachytherapy, which offers men with locally advanced stage prostate cancer the best outcomes in terms of disease-free survival and reduced complication rates. The treatment is performed as an out-patient procedure.

Dr. Sunil Gulavita, Head and Coordinator of Radiation Oncology at TBRHSC, performs the HDR prostate brachytherapy treatments. "HDR prostate brachytherapy provides men with locally advanced prostate cancer a safe and effective treatment option with very low risk," he says. "With minimal post-procedure discomfort, less toxicity and the avoidance of longer treatments compared with conventional external beam therapy alone, the patient's quality of life is improved."

HDR prostate brachytherapy involves implanting needles in the prostate. Small catheters connect the needles to a machine which moves a radioactive source to pre-planned positions in the prostate to deliver the radiation dose. A computer controls the movement of the source; therefore the time and position of the source in different parts of the prostate can be controlled to give the most favourable distribution of radiation dose. Once the desired dose is delivered, the radioactive source returns to the machine. The treatment is delivered over a period of a few minutes. No radioactive material remains in the patient after treatment.

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The HDR brachytherapy program at Regional Cancer Care has been very successful in treating gynaecological cancers, and is periodically used for treatment in lung and oesophageal cancer patients.

The introduction of HDR prostate brachytherapy marks the expansion of a successful program and is yet another demonstration of Regional Cancer Care's commitment to Cancer Care Ontario's 2008-2011 Ontario Cancer Plan.

"We continue to lead Ontario in providing leading-edge cancer treatments for our patients in the Northwest, and this patient-centred initiative is a great example in minimizing patient discomfort and maximizing quality of life," says Michael Power, VP Regional Cancer Services and Diagnostics at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.

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