

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are interventional cardiac services?**

Interventional cardiology refers to cardiac procedures to investigate and treat disorders of the blood vessels supplying the heart muscle as well as problems with the heart valves and rhythm disturbances. Interventional cardiac services are provided in a cardiac catheterization laboratory and include cardiac catheterization, vascular angiography, vascular angioplasty, stenting and implantation of pacemakers and defibrillators.

In addition to a catheterization lab, interventional cardiac programs require additional acute care infrastructure, including Cardiovascular Intensive Care Units (CICU) beds and recovery spaces.

### **Where is cardiac catheterization offered in Alberta?**

Cardiac catheterization is currently provided in Edmonton (University of Alberta Hospital's Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute and Royal Alexandra Hospital's CK Hui Heart Centre), and Calgary (Foothills Medical Centre). Patients requiring urgent, emergent and elective interventional services are referred to one of these three centres.

### **How do patients outside Calgary and Edmonton receive interventional cardiac care?**

Patients outside Calgary and Edmonton who require cardiac catheterization due to a heart attack or other cardiac conditions are transported to either Calgary or Edmonton, and are given medication to help stabilize their condition prior transport to one of these centres.

### **Why isn't cardiac catheterization available in smaller urban centres?**

We know patients in Alberta's urban centres outside Calgary and Edmonton need timely access to high quality cardiac care, close to home. Clinicians agree that local access to specialized cardiac care will improve the level of care they are able to provide patients locally and will mean more equitable access to accepted standard of care closer to home.

Interventional cardiac programs, including cardiac catheterization programs, require the support of specific acute care infrastructure and services, including CICU beds as well as holding and recovery spaces. Interventional cardiology programs in regional centres which have all necessary foundational elements in place also need to have enough demand locally for their services, in order to ensure that their specialized teams are prepared to deliver quality care and services.

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### **What is being done to improve access to specialized cardiac services in small urban and rural areas?**

Alberta Health (AH), in partnership with Alberta Health Services (AHS), have developed an approach to assess the needs of regional and small urban communities. This approach is evidence-based and aligns with best practice nationally and abroad.

The Interventional Cardiac Services Needs Assessment and Options Analysis provides an evidence-based approach to delivering interventional cardiac services in Alberta, which will help ensure all Albertans have appropriate and equitable access to cardiac care.

### **Who was involved in creating this report?**

This document was completed under the guidance of the Interventional Cardiac Services (ICS) Oversight Committee, which included physicians, clinical staff and leaders and operational stakeholders from across Alberta, as well as patient and family advisors.

The committee met in September 2017 to review data and health trends and identify foundational elements that would need to be in place prior to the implementation of a catheterization lab and to identify and evaluate best options.

### **What information was considered?**

The ICS Oversight Committee reviewed current literature, best practices and health data, with a focus on Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Other key elements for consideration included patient and family perspectives, clinician perspectives, health outcomes data and financial implications.

### **What did the report find?**

Here is what the report found:

- A number of factors contribute to determining cardiac health outcomes, including cardiac wellness and prevention programs as well as access to specialized cardiac services like cardiac catheterization.
- A number of foundational elements need to be in place before interventional cardiac programs can be created in centres outside Calgary and Edmonton.
- These foundational elements include infrastructure and building space, supporting programs such as Cardiac Critical Care Units (CCU) and cardiac wellness and rehabilitation programs.
- Based on the patient populations they serve and a number of other factors, Red Deer and Lethbridge are able to begin examining what would be required to put these foundational elements in place, including cost and personnel requirements.

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- This process will also require an analysis of existing infrastructure and building space, community supports and depth of current cardiac programs.

### **Will Lethbridge and Red Deer receive Cardiac Interventional Catheterization Laboratories?**

The Committee that oversaw the development of the needs assessment and options analysis considered two options:

- Implement interventional cardiac services in Red Deer and Lethbridge;
- Focus on developing and expanding foundational services such as cardiac wellness and prevention programs more broadly across Alberta.

Although the committee was split between the two options, it did recommend proceeding with building foundational service levels across the province, regardless of whether catheterization labs are put in place in Red Deer and Lethbridge. This will help ensure that Albertans outside large urban centres will have improved access to cardiac care.