

Press Release

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Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute unveils \$12 million research platform in Imaging Guided Interventions

Leading-edge Philips 3T MRI scanner to be installed at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

Thunder Bay, ON – The Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute today announced a \$12 million Imaging Guided Interventions research platform and the acquisition of two Philips 3T MRI scanners. One will be used for translational research at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC), the other for joint research at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

Scientists at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, in partnership with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and Philips Healthcare, will use the MRI scanners to investigate different applications of HIFU (High-intensity focused ultrasound) therapy in treating cancer tumours and ultimately develop new medical devices for the international market.

HIFU is an example of Imaging Guided Interventions; technology that can be used to improve surgical procedures and often eliminate the need for invasive surgery, resulting in better outcomes and faster recovery for patients.

“There is a global need for the development of new technologies that allow for the early diagnosis and treatment of disease. We will be taking a leadership role in the development of molecular imaging and advanced diagnostic research in this partnership with TBRHSC, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and Philips Healthcare,” said Keith Jobbitt, Chair of the Board, Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

The leading-edge Philips Achieva 3T X-series MRI scanners are key building blocks in the research collaboration between Thunder Bay and Sunnybrook. MRI scanners provide a high quality method of medical imaging. HIFU uses heat to destroy tumours; since MRIs can monitor temperature changes in tissues, scientists can readily assess the result of the HIFU therapy.

Dr. Laura Curiel and Dr. Samuel Pichardo, both scientists with the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, will work with Dr. Kullervo Hynynen of Sunnybrook Research Institute to explore the use of HIFU as a leading non-invasive therapy for a wide range of medical conditions, from soft-tissue cancer tumours to neurodegenerative disease.

“This partnership shows that distance is no object when it comes to sharing a vision of inventing the future of healthcare,” said Dr. Michael Julius, Vice President, Research, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. “The establishment of this research platform will see the pioneering work of Dr. Hynynen advanced to the next level of innovation with Drs. Curiel and Pichardo in Thunder Bay and in doing so accelerate discovery so that we can translate the results to our patients sooner.”

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The Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute is committed to bringing innovative technologies and techniques to patients in Northwestern Ontario. Not only does this benefit patients, the regional economy will benefit as technology innovations go to market in the global arena.

"Our government is proud to be a contributor to the medical advancements and partnerships announced here today," said MPP Bill Mauro. "We're proud to support Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute as it continues to be a community leader in medical research and innovation and our knowledge based economy continues to expand."

For more information please contact:

Kathryn Lyzun
807.684.7239
Communications Officer
Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute
lyzunk@tbh.net

About the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute

The Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute is Canada's newest health research institute located in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is an independent, not-for-profit research corporation and a joint venture partner of Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC). The Research Institute's mission is to improve the quality of healthcare through excellence in patient-centred research, pioneering a new standard of excellence in the clinical investigation of novel molecular imaging-based diagnostic technologies for disease prevention, early detection and image-guided treatment. Key partners include Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Lakehead University, Philips Healthcare, Cancer Care Ontario, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and Confederation College.

About Sunnybrook Research Institute

Sunnybrook Research Institute (SRI), the research enterprise of Toronto-based Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, is inventing the future of health care. At SRI, researchers strive to understand and prevent disease, and to develop treatments that enhance and extend life. These aims derive from a core mission: to make discoveries in medical science and translate them into the clinic to benefit patients. As one of the fastest-growing research institutes in Canada, SRI now conducts over \$100 million in research annually, a threefold increase since 1998. Its 180 scientists have an international reputation for excellence in medical research in the areas of molecular and cellular biology, imaging, clinical integrative biology, clinical epidemiology and health services sciences as they apply to the most pressing problems in health care.

