

New clinic reduces wait times for prostate tests

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Waiting times for test results to determine prostate cancer have been cut to a fraction of the time due to a new referral process.

Officials with the Calgary Health Region say it now takes two weeks to get results, as opposed to an average of three months.

The waiting time reductions were achieved by directing patients who were at risk to the health region's new Rapid Access Clinic which has a rotation of urologists on staff that can see patients.

Previously a patient would have to get a referral to a specific doctor who would typically have a lengthy queue of patients.

Dr. Bryan Donnelly, one of the urologists at the clinic, says the reduced wait time allow patients to receive treatment faster, if they require it.

"A really big part of this becoming a reality, was a change in paradigm for the practising specialists in urology," said Donnelly.

"In other words, a willingness to change how we have handled the flow of patients in the normal pattern."

Every year in Calgary, between 750 and 800 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Doug Driediger said he was originally told it would take two months for an initial consultation with a specialist. With the advent of the new clinic, he was able to have the tests done and receive surgery in the same amount of time.

Driediger says the psychological benefit is huge.

"Having some sense of closure, if not a happy ending was so vital. Had I been waiting three months to determine if I even had cancer, or surgery recommended, that would have been, for this cowboy, pretty tough."

The Health Region says it will cost about \$60,000 a year to operate the Rapid Access Clinic.