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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital now offers comprehensive Breast Assessment

(Strathroy, ON) – The Ontario Breast Screening Program screening site, located at the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH), has been working with Cancer Care Ontario to successfully attain the Breast Assessment Program (BAP) status.

Ten percent of women who undergo breast cancer screening will be called back for further tests and follow-up. The path that women follow from the time they find out they may have a breast problem, or abnormality, until the time they receive a definitive diagnosis is called “breast assessment.”

Strathroy is now equipped to provide timely, high quality diagnosis and follow-up. The SMGH program offers full assessment including biopsies on site with the same radiologists who oversee the St. Joseph’s Health Care (London) Breast Assessment Program.

“This is great news for women in the area, who will now be able to receive comprehensive, high-quality, multi-disciplinary assessment services closer to home,” expresses Dr. Olga Shmuilovich, SMGH BAP Program Lead. “Breast health navigators play a key role in our new program to minimize anxiety for the patient. They coordinate appointments to lessen wait time, and ensure patients receive the information and emotional support they need”.

SMGH performs 4,000 mammograms per year, and it is estimated that over 600 patients per year will benefit from the additional assessment services. Complex cases requiring MRI will still be referred to St. Joseph’s Health Care (London).

Although the focus of the program is to increase access and decrease the “diagnostic” wait times, SMGH has also enhanced the service to expedite surgical treatment. The navigator ensures all surgical referrals are facilitated and promotes SMGH surgical services as an option for referring physicians. There is a heightened awareness and priority attention to wait times for oncology cases. SMGH surgeons have committed to a surgical consultation within 5 business days of receiving a referral for a malignant case. Improved availability of operating room time and surgeon flexibility has consistently reduced the wait time for surgery. Our improvements have maintained the wait times for surgery well below the provincial wait target of 28 days, and increased the number of surgical referrals over 40% from the previous year.

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“I am very pleased that SMGH is now able to offer a complete Breast Assessment Program (BAP) through collaboration with Cancer Care Ontario,” states Todd Stepanuik, President & CEO, Middlesex Hospital Alliance. “This designation affords MHA the opportunity to offer a complete program to our patients closer to home”.

In order to provide this enhanced level of care, new and improved technology was required. Necessary equipment required for this service has been made possible by the generous donations of the community to the SMGH Foundation campaign, *“Hasten the Diagnosis, Simplify the Journey”*.

About MHA:

The Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) is comprised of two fully-accredited partner sites: Four Counties Health Services and Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital.

A progressive, team-oriented and technologically adept organization of excellence, the MHA is creating a more integrated and seamless approach to treatment by embracing and seeking out partnerships, through collaboration and investing in people. This coordinated approach helps to ensure that a high level of service is provided while reducing costs and continually enhancing quality.

Providing core acute primary and secondary hospital care, the MHA has also been recognized for establishing two notable Centres of Achievement (Orthopaedics and Diabetes Education Centre) that generate local and regional referrals.