

MRI SERVICES IN SASKATCHEWAN BACKGROUND

Access to specialized diagnostic imaging services continues to be a provincial and national issue. As demand for these tests continues to rise, Saskatchewan is both meeting the demand and making progress in reducing wait times and wait lists.

Investments

Significant funding has been invested to increase the province's diagnostic imaging capacity and ensure patients receive timely service. In 2004/05, \$20 million in federal funding arising from the First Ministers' Meeting was directed to improved diagnostic imaging services. An additional \$10.5 million was invested in this area in 2005/06, and again in the current fiscal year. The funding has been used in part to:

- increase MRI operating hours into evenings and weekends;
- purchase a second MRI for Regina;
- develop radiology information technology; and
- set up a Diagnostic Imaging Network to create a provincial plan for services.

Saskatchewan's capacity to provide MRI services has increased dramatically:

Saskatchewan's Progress: MRI Capacity

	Number of MRI Units	Exams Completed	Percentage Increase (Exams)	Patients Waiting
2002-03	3	12,330	N/A	N/A
2003-04	3	12,732	3%	4,822
2004-05	3	16,113	26%	3,174
2005-06	4	19,618	22%	2,786
2006-07 (Projected)	4	23,910	22%	2,460*

* As of December 31, 2006

Patients Waiting

Waits for MRI exams are getting shorter in Saskatchewan, even though demand increased 14 per cent in the first nine months of 2006-07. The number of patients waiting has dropped 42 per cent in the past two years.

Emergency MRIs are done within 24 hours, and urgent MRIs within one week.

Elective patients wait less than three months in Regina (down from 13 months a year earlier) and less than six months in Saskatoon.