

LEADER-POST

Day surgeries expanded

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Head, shoulders, knees and toes - they're all covered in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region's new contract for day surgeries.

The RQHR has contracted Surgical Centres Inc. (SCI) to perform 38 types of surgeries in a communitybased setting, from septoplasty to shoulder or knee arthroscopy to bunionectomy.

SCI will provide at least 5,650 procedures per year under the new contract, which is effective immediately and runs until November 2017, with an option to extend.

Having surgery through a third-party provider is better for some patients, said Val Hunko, RQHR vice-president of Integrated Health Services. "It does actually level the playing field, if you will, in terms of creating a better access," said Hunko.

"They don't spend overnight; they're just in and out, so it's less time spent waiting and they aren't exposed to people who are sick or in the hospital. And it's also a little bit easier to navigate for patients and families and it's a different type of environment with not a lot of waiting."

Physicians must approve patients for surgery in a third-party setting; those who are medically unstable are not eligible, said Hunko.

The community-based contract is part of the plan to reduce surgical wait times to no more than three months by March 31, 2015.

At this point, 1,164 patients have waited longer than three months for surgery, which is way down from last March when 4,829 people were waiting for surgeries.

In 2013-14, 5,460 of 26,613 surgeries took place outside of a hospital.

The RQHR expects the same of its third-party providers as it does of its own employees, said Hunko.

"They do have to follow the same expectations and guidelines in delivering service, so they do have an accreditation process they have to meet," she said. "They have to report to us on a regular basis; they share that information with us."

Day surgeries have been offered outside of hospitals since 2012. The request for proposal for this contract was issued last September. Two vendors were in the running for the contract, said Hunko. Previously, Aspen Medical Surgery had a surgical contract with RQHR, as did SCI.

Ophthalmology, orthopedics and dental are three areas that have been expanded in the new contract.

The RQHR also offers magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) services through third-party providers.

It hopes to offer endoscopies in a community setting in the spring.

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