Hamilton collaboration transforms the future of medical imaging

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Mohawk College and McMaster University welcome advanced GE HealthCare MRI for research, education and patient care

Hamilton, ON, Aug. 24, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Mohawk College and McMaster University announced today the opening of the Centre for Integrated and Advanced Medical Imaging (CIAMI), a new facility for educational training, imaging research, and increased magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) access for patient care.

CIAMI provides a space where education, clinical care, and research intersect through collaborative and unique models of care and approaches to training that have not been done before in Ontario.

In addition to education and research components, CIAMI partners with the affiliated academic hospital systems, Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. The Ontario Ministry of Health has provided $5 million in funding over three years to support the creation, development, and testing of the CIAMI model, including funding to operate an MRI for clinical use.

CIAMI provides a revolutionary approach to cutting wait times and could double the speed of service for patients needing MRI scans. Currently, the provincial average for MRI scans is 1.54 patients per hour, but early CIAMI data from a pilot at St. Joseph's suggests that could be improved.

Located at the Mohawk-McMaster Institute of Applied Health Sciences building on the university's main campus, the facility includes a newly installed advanced MRI unit, the second of its kind in Canada.

CIAMI enables a new model of training with a living lab for interdisciplinary teams to provide education, taking pressure off hospitals for clinical placements while expediting the capability to graduate MRI technologists into the system.

CIAMI will also be the site for continuing research, with access to innovative technologies and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to enable cutting-edge discoveries. CIAMI brings technology and healthcare together in Hamilton to propel advancements in imaging research.

"We have a backlog of patients waiting for MRI scans in our region, we are facing a health human resource crisis in Ontario, we have challenges in meeting the imaging needs of our hospital in-patients and our researchers need access to equipment that isn't competing with clinical needs," said Julian Dobranowski, professor and chair of the Department of Medical Imaging at McMaster and an adjunct professor at Mohawk College. "CIAMI provides an innovative solution to all of these issues. We are excited to validate this new model of care to enhance patient care across the province."

The new model of care has been piloted at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton's Imaging Research Center (IRC) and will continue at CIAMI in the fall.

CIAMI is supported by funding from Mohawk and McMaster, the Juravinski Research Institute, and a grant from the Government of Ontario's College Equipment and Renewal Fund (CERF), with additional funding to operate an MRI coming from the province.

GE HealthCare (GEHC), the manufacturer of the MRI that has been installed in the facility, and CIAMI are collaborating on initiatives to increase access to resources to support education and research.

Quotes:

"Our government is continuing our work to build a more connected and convenient healthcare system by improving access to services across the province. We are proud to partner with McMaster University and Mohawk College to ensure CIAMI has the funds they need to operate their new MRI suite to increase access to diagnostic imaging, reduce wait times and connect patients to the care they need, close to home.
– Sylvia Jones, Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

"The creation of CIAMI provides a clear example of how Mohawk College and McMaster University work together with community partners to everyone's benefit. Together, we will conduct research to identify best practices, will offer students exceptional training, and will provide greater access to MRI services for patients. We are excited to move forward on this initiative with our valued partners."
– Ron McKerlie, president and CEO, Mohawk College

"At McMaster, we believe in working with our community to advance human and societal health and well-being. The new CIAMI facility is an excellent example of how close collaboration with our academic partner Mohawk College and our academic hospital partners Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton is helping build a brighter, healthier future for our community."
– David Farrar, president and vice-chancellor, McMaster University

"This centre presents an exciting opportunity for patients, clinicians, and students alike. The combined focus on teaching and research will undoubtedly give way to new solutions to some of our health system's most pressing issues, including healthcare worker shortages and diagnostic imaging wait times. It's a promising addition to Hamilton's robust health research and hospital network."
– Rob MacIsaac, president and CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences

"The opening of this centre will build on the important partnerships among our educational institutions and health care organizations. It brings together our brightest minds to challenge what we do today, improve the way imaging technologies are used and services are delivered, to benefit patients across our region and beyond."

– John Aldis, interim president, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

"As healthcare systems continue to grapple with labor shortages and diagnostics wait times, GE HealthCare is committed to creating solutions that address these challenges directly through innovative and sustainable collaborations with our customers. The installation of GE HealthCare's SIGNA Premier MR platform and the material support for training we will provide at CIAMI will help power their new training model for medical professionals and support CIAMI to improve patient care and outcomes in the Ontario community."
– Mike Hamilton, president of GE HealthCare in Canada

"Mohawk College focuses on creating future-ready graduates through experiential learning, applied research, and interprofessional education. The Medical Radiation Sciences program, in partnership with the Faculty of Science at McMaster University, is an example of best practice across the country. The joint purchase of an MRI and the creation of CIAMI, as a centre of excellence in the field, will provide game-changing opportunities for our students and offers an entirely novel approach to community patient care."
– Wendy Lawson, associate vice-president, Academic and dean, School of Health and Community Services, Mohawk College

"CIAMI is certainly a win-win-win for Hamilton. Besides offering research opportunities with state-of-the-art technologies and first-class education for students, it will boost the community's access to advanced health care."
– Paul O'Byrne, dean and vice-president, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University

"The Faculty of Science is proud to continue building on our long-standing collaboration with Mohawk College. The new Centre for Integrated and Advanced Medical Imaging will create even more learning and research opportunities for our students and faculty members while also addressing a real need in our community for timely imaging service."
– Maureen MacDonald, dean, Faculty of Science, McMaster University

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