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NEWS RELEASE

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Contingency Planning Continues for Possible Temporary Disruption of Services at Leader Hospital

The Cypress Health Region and its team of health care providers in Leader are continuing to develop the contingency plans for the growing possibility of a temporary disruption of services at the Leader Hospital near the end of May. With the departure of two permanent physicians in May, there will be a need to temporarily disrupt several services at the Hospital due to the unavailability of physician on-call coverage.

As earlier mentioned, Dr. Deborah Djan and Dr. Tom Cybula have indicated they will be leaving their medical practice in late May 2010. Although the recent arrival of Dr. Monga-N'Dimo Palangi has temporarily brought the physician complement to three, he requires to practice in a group setting where his mentorship needs will be met until he attains a full licensure status with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. Dr. Djan and Dr. Cybula will provide this mentorship for Dr. Palangi until their departure from the clinic.

A number of discussions have taken place to address the planning needs relating to program/service availability, protection of staff hours, and medical clinic coverage. "Although there is mutual agreement that no one desires these types of changes to occur, everyone is realizing that we need to plan for the possibility of a temporary disruption taking place," stated Beth Vachon, Interim CEO for Cypress Health. "Due to the current situation, we have no course of action other than to try and ensure that the community's health needs are covered to the best of our ability."

Although the contingency plan has not yet been confirmed, the health region would like to offer the following update on some of the planning taking place. The temporary changes will be confirmed in later-May, with the actual date and time to be clarified.

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- Leader Hospital will be open for 8 hours per day, Monday to Friday, and will offer a reduced set of programs and services during the temporary disruption.
 - Will operate similar to that of a non-emergency 'health centre' – lab/xray staff/services would be available for previously-booked or physician/NP ordered tests only; registered nursing staff available to provide previously-booked procedures (ex. B12 vaccination, dressing changes, etc.).
 - There will be NO emergency outpatient department services or inpatient admissions available during this temporary disruption.
- EMS or ambulance services will be enhanced as much as can be within the availability of staffing. An EMS staff member will be physically located at the Hospital as often as possible, to assist with the need to transfer any individual to the nearest (or most appropriate) acute facility offering emergency services.
 - On-call EMS staffing will be scheduled for the second ambulance, within staffing availability.
- Locum (temporary part-time) physician recruitment efforts are continuing, with the primary objective being to provide as much coverage as possible at the primary health care clinic during the temporary disruption. Requests are being directed at physicians who are able/interested in coming to Leader as a longer-term locum (that is, several months) or part-time locum (that is, 1-2 days per week) to assist with seeing clients at the clinic.
 - Nurse Practitioner will continue to see clients at the Leader clinic, along with weekly visits to the community of Eatonia.
 - The region is exploring the potential to recruit a second Nurse Practitioner for a temporary period, who could assist the Leader clinic during this timeframe.
 - Dr. Palangi will be able to see clients at the Leader location when supported by a fully-licensed physician. He will be writing his CAPE exam (necessary step to attain his full licensure with the College) in mid-May. The results are expected within 4-6 weeks of writing, and he will have to continue practicing in a group practice mentorship setting during that time.
 - Attempts are being made to secure part-time assistance from members of the Cypress physician team to travel to Leader 1-2 days per week to assist with seeing clients and providing the mentorship assistance for Dr. Palangi.
 - The recruitment of Dr. Moyce has received a major set-back, as she has indicated she will no longer be joining the Leader Clinic team. Her family member is experiencing challenges from the Immigration process and thus she cannot commit to moving to Canada.
 - The Saskatchewan Medical Association's (SMA) Rural Relief Program is not available to assist during this time, as the program's objective is to provide locum assistance for existing permanent physicians to take some time off for vacations and other short-term absences. Their availability of locum physicians is in short supply, and the program is not intended to provide locums in these types of longer-term clinic needs.

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- Staffing hours will be guaranteed for permanent full-time and part-time Hospital staff members, thus these staff members will not lose guaranteed hours of work.
 - Staffing will continue to be on-site at the Hospital building during the revised hours of operation (that is, 8 hours per day, Monday to Friday). Other options being discussed include staff being relocated to the Western Senior's Home or other acute/long term care facilities or Home Care, as well as the ability to access casual hours in neighboring Cypress facilities or Home Care.
 - Extra meetings are planned with staff to discuss options.
 - Community Health Services and Home Care will continue to be provided as per normal.
- The care of residents at the Western Senior's Home will not be impacted by this temporary disruption. A physician will be on-call and accessible to the staff to consult if any issues arise, and there will be weekly physician rounds at the facility.

"These tentative plans will continue to be discussed with the staff and medical team over the next several days, but we will move towards confirming the official plan in the very near future," added Vachon. "We will continue to search for other workable options as we move closer to the effective date and onwards, and every effort will be made to return to a regular mix of health programs and services at the Leader Hospital as soon as possible."

Further updates will be provided when the contingency planning has been confirmed. Cypress Health will be distributing an informational mailout to every household in the near future to provide a full description of the programs and services that will be available during the temporary disruption.

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For more information, please contact:

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