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MEDIA RELEASE

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New Surgical Program for Hips and Knees

Middlesex Hospital Alliance is stepping up to a new program — Hip And Knee Joint Replacements. “The Ministry has approved us to perform 150 total joint replacement surgeries over the next year,” Mike Mazza, CEO of Middlesex Hospital Alliance, says.

Total joint replacement is one of the five major health services targeted by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with their recent Wait Times strategy. The strategy is designed to increase access and reduce wait times for joint replacements, including significantly increasing the number of procedures to reduce the backlog that has developed over the last decade. According to the Ministry, patients can use the Wait Times information reported on the Ministry web site system “to make informed choices about where to be referred for quicker service.” Currently in Southwestern Ontario, wait times for a total knee replacement surgery, for example, can reach almost 300 days, compared with the provincial average of 164 days.

The MHA Hip and Knee Joint Replacement program is starting modestly, Mazza says. “We are communicating directly with local physicians and with the residents of our region to let them know about this additional capability at Strathroy site.” Mazza predicts the 150 surgeries will be expanded as the program catches on and physicians and residents become aware that they can be referred close to home at Strathroy, instead of more distant hospitals.

“I’m very pleased that our government was able to provide the opportunity for the MHA Strathroy site to offer this new initiative under our Wait Times strategy,” Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Maria Van Bommel says, adding, “It truly demonstrates how the capacity of hospitals in smaller urban centres and rural sites can provide quality care to their residents. I’m very proud of the way that the staff and physicians at MHA have embraced this program and moved it forward so quickly.”

The most common reason for having a hip or knee replaced is osteoarthritis. This is a degenerative joint disease, marked by the breakdown of the joint's cartilage. It most commonly affects people over age 45, however younger men and women can also get this disease. A joint replacement is aimed at helping people live fuller more active lives.

When only some of the joint is damaged, a surgeon may be able to repair or replace just the damaged parts. When the entire joint is damaged, a total joint replacement is done. To replace a total hip or knee joint, a surgeon removes the diseased or damaged parts and inserts artificial parts, called prostheses or implants.

CEO Mike Mazza, says that Hips and Knees will be an important program at MHA in the near future. “This is exactly the sort of niche program that community hospitals can and will operate successfully and efficiently. Our new Hips and Knees Program will play a major future role at Middlesex Hospital Alliance.”