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**MANITOBA BREAST CANCER PATIENTS WILL BENEFIT
FROM STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS, FASTER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT****Specialized Equipment Part of Manitoba's Strategy
To Improve Patient Journey: Oswald**

The Manitoba government is investing in an advanced diagnostic machine that helps determine the best therapy for breast cancer patients and will dramatically speed up treatment, as well as introducing digital mammography machines across the province to speed up breast cancer testing, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

“By bringing these advanced tools home to Manitoba, we can shorten the time spent waiting for diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer by weeks,” said Oswald. “Instead of spending this time wondering about test results, Manitobans with breast cancer will be able to move forward with treatment options with the advice of their health-care providers.”

The Diagnostic Services of Manitoba laboratory in St. Boniface General Hospital has recently installed a new advanced diagnostic machine to speed up treatment for more aggressive forms of breast cancer. Pathologists use the new genetic testing equipment to detect and analyze a specific protein called HER2, or human epidermal growth factor receptor, to help identify which breast cancer treatments will be most effective. HER2-positive breast cancers are more aggressive and difficult to treat with conventional approaches, but once identified can be more effectively treated. Previously, many of these tests were performed out of province.

“We are proud to have this important molecular diagnostic technology, which is the future of cancer tissue analysis, available in our province,” said Jim Slater, chief executive officer of DSM. “By bringing this state of the art test home, we are able to provide high-quality testing procedures to assist in patient care and cut the wait time for results from six weeks down to approximately one week for hundreds of Manitobans who have this analysis done every year.”

The minister also announced the Manitoba government is investing in digital mammogram equipment machines across the province. The digital machines will replace traditional film images that, in some cases, would need to be shipped to a radiologist for assessment and then reported to the patient's physician. The digital technology will ensure the new digital mammograms can be viewed and analyzed by health-care providers across the province, ensuring a faster, more seamless use of these images for patient care, regardless of location, Oswald said.

“Early detection of breast cancer through mammograms is an effective way to help Manitoba women live longer and healthier lives,” said Dr. Ethel MacIntosh, medical director of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority’s Breast Health Clinic. “Streamlining all of the diagnostic images into one digital system will ensure this important patient information is available to all health-care professionals caring for patients even if they are in different locations.”

The first digital machines are expected to be in place this year. About 90,000 Manitobans have a mammogram every year and these are currently done on 18 analog machines in 10 sites and two mobile vehicles that visit 90 communities across the province.

“The transition to digital mammography means physicians and their patients will be able to set a course of treatment more quickly than before,” said Dr. Dhali Dhaliwal, president and chief executive officer of CancerCare Manitoba. “Investments in screening, diagnostics and treatment are all important components of improving the overall cancer patient journey for Manitobans and their families. Early detection is the best way to diagnose breast cancer when it is most treatable.”

Breast cancer is one the most common forms of cancer among women in Manitoba. The minister noted these strategic investments in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment will help support Manitoba’s broader \$40-million strategy to improve the cancer patient journey, first announced in June 2011. The goal of this initiative is to shorten the journey from suspicion of cancer as a diagnosis to treatment in under 60 days. Many partners are involved in this work including CancerCare Manitoba, regional health authorities, Diagnostic Services Manitoba, eHealth Manitoba, Manitoba Health, primary care physicians and cancer specialists.

Every year, more than 6,100 Manitobans are diagnosed with cancer, while up to 10 times that number are suspected of having cancer and undergo testing before it is ruled out.