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Enhanced Pregnancy and Infant Loss Program offers families hope and healing

CALGARY – An enhanced Pregnancy and Infant Loss Program at the Foothills Medical Centre’s Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic launches this month, providing new space and increased privacy for women and families who’ve experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death.

Thanks to the generosity of numerous donors through the Calgary Health Trust, the program has been improved to bring together existing resources into a single space. Patients now have access to a private waiting room, consultation room and counselling area in a modern, comforting environment to support them and their family through an extremely difficult period.

Supporting bereaved parents through their loss and grief is an integral part of the program’s family-centred care philosophy. The program serves more than 1,500 patients each year and offers a spectrum of resources, including grief support through individual or couples counselling, group support for parents, memorial services and events of remembrance, and a mementoes program.

“The loss of a pregnancy or a newborn is one of the most difficult experiences imaginable. This program gives Alberta families the space, time and resources to begin the grieving process. It’s an inspiring example of how foundation partners, the community and care teams can work together to realize a common vision of compassionate support and care,” says Brandy Payne, Associate Minister of Health.

Calgary Health Trust has invested \$416,000 in Calgary Zone pregnancy and infant loss services since 2000. This includes the \$110,000 investment to amalgamate the Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic and the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Program at the Foothills Medical Centre, and \$306,000 devoted to resources such as memory boxes, quiet and comfortable spaces for bereavement, materials for families struggling to understand their loss and specialized staff training.

Funding has also been invested to refurbish a second pregnancy loss room at the Foothills Medical Centre, and update pregnancy loss rooms at Rockyview General Hospital, Peter Lougheed Centre and South Health Campus to create a more comfortable environment for families at those facilities.

“We are fortunate to have a program in Calgary dedicated to pregnancy and infant loss,” says Dr. Chris Eagle, CEO of Calgary Health Trust. “It’s a sad reality that many families will require not only the medical, but also the compassionate, care this program provides. But thanks to the support of our donors, many of whom have relied on the program in the past, the community offers a message of hope and healing in some of the most challenging times a family will face.”

Bryan Peffers, Foothills Medical Centre’s Executive Director of Women’s Health, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Anesthesia & Respiratory, says the enhanced Pregnancy and Infant Loss Program is the only one of its kind in the Calgary Zone to offer a private space and waiting area specifically dedicated to women who’ve experienced the loss of an infant or pregnancy.

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“This new space enables us to deliver a range of services in one central, discreet and easy to access location,” Peffers says. “The program has been offered to patients since 2000 but up until now, it was spread across multiple areas at Foothills Medical Centre. Because of the passion and compassion of our donors, and visionary leadership, we now offer patients an enhanced level of support and inclusivity.”

Each year, one in four pregnant women in the Calgary Zone will experience a pregnancy loss or infant loss. There are approximately 200 stillbirths and neonatal deaths, and approximately 4,000 miscarriages, in the Calgary Zone annually.

A second Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic is slated to open at the South Health Campus in February. Like the clinic at Foothills Medical Centre, it will provide a range of services including diagnostic investigations, information and options for expectant women, medical, or surgical management of an incomplete miscarriage (under 12 weeks gestation), psychosocial support and education.

This investment by Calgary Health Trust has been made possible thanks to events such as the Tiny Footprints Gala, Walk to Remember, Raise Up Retreat, as well as a number of private donations from donors and community groups.

Calgary Health Trust is a Calgary-based charity focused on fundraising that will transform health care in Alberta. The incredible generosity of our donors has helped to raise more than \$427 million for health care since 1996. Funds raised benefit Foothills Medical Centre, Peter Lougheed Centre, Rockyview General Hospital, South Health Campus, many community health programs and 12 Carewest care centres in our community. For more information about Calgary Health Trust and its strategic priorities, visit calgaryhealthtrust.ca.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

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