

27 July 2019

Dear Sir / Madam

PROVISION OF PET/CT FOR FLINDERS MEDICAL CENTRE

I am writing regarding the need for a Positron Emission Tomography – Computed Tomography (PET-CT) service at Flinders Medical Centre (FMC) to service the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN).

PET-CT is a nuclear medicine imaging test in which a small amount of radioactive material is injected into the body and then a scan is performed to help evaluate organ and tissue functions. By identifying body changes at the cellular level, PET-CT may detect the early onset of disease before it is evident on other imaging tests.

Applications for PET are broad, including Cardiology, Neurology (particularly evaluation of patients with Dementia), immunological and inflammatory conditions, but it is mainly used in Oncology. There is proven cost effectiveness with use of PET-CT in the evaluation of a number of cancers and it is considered an essential component of standard of care worldwide in Oncology imaging.

There is an increasing incidence of cancer in Adelaide. The numbers of new cases are expected to rise in the future as a result of population growth and ageing. Advances in screening, diagnostic and treatment technologies and service delivery are leading to improved survivals from many types of cancers in Australia. As the incidence of specific cancers that benefit from PET-CT imaging rises, the demand on the PET-CT imaging will dramatically increase in South Australia.

There is significant disparity in imaging service provision across the local health networks within SA.

The first PET in SA was installed at Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) in 2001. The RAH then had a 2nd PET-CT installed in 2017. There are now 4 PET-CTs in SA (2 public and 2 private), all within a 500m radius of the new RAH. There is no PET-CT facility south of the city.

The FMC Nuclear Medicine Department has been lobbying for a PET-CT for over 10 years. The delay in expanding easy access to patients outside the Central Adelaide Local Health Network has been prolonged and is unacceptable. The lack of an onsite facility at FMC frequently results in delayed diagnosis and initiation of treatment, which ultimately disadvantages these patients, many of whom live and work in the Southern region.

Flinders Medical Centre is a large tertiary public teaching hospital and medical school, adjacent the Flinders Centre for Innovation in Cancer (FCIC). The FCIC is stated to be a leading cancer centre in Australia, housing world-class care and survivorship services alongside innovative cancer prevention and early intervention research, yet is lacking a PET-CT facility.

An onsite public PET-CT service at FMC would provide long-overdue equality of access to comprehensive Cancer Care for patients in the Southern Region.

Yours sincerely

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Dr Sally Cox
Radiologist / Nuclear Medicine Specialist