



## MEDIA RELEASE

# New dermatology program fills gap in clinical services

## *Two dermatologists recruited, clinics underway at Hotel Dieu Hospital*

(Kingston, ON, April 16, 2014) The shortage of dermatologists in this region—and how that has translated into long waits or travel outside the area to see a skin specialist—is about to end.

This month, the Department of Medicine at Queen’s University is launching a new academic Division of Dermatology that will base its specialized clinics at Hotel Dieu Hospital and the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario.

The Hotel Dieu clinics started up the week of March 31, when Dr. Yuka Asai began seeing patients. Recruited from McGill University where she is completing a PhD, Asai brings clinical expertise in dermatology and research interests that include understanding the genetic basis of peanut allergy. In August, the Division will add a second specialist physician/PhD, Dr. Mark Kirchoff, to help meet the growing demand for dermatological services at a time when skin cancer rates alone are skyrocketing.

“The Canadian Dermatology Workforce Survey documents a national shortage of dermatologists,” says Dr. Stephen Archer, Head of the Department of Medicine at Queen’s University.

“Workforce documents indicate that the clinical needs of an area with the population of Southeastern Ontario should be served by approximately nine dermatologists. Until now, however, we’ve had only one very busy private practice dermatologist.

“Typically, patients have seen the existing dermatologist, been referred elsewhere or not seen at all. Patients have been dramatically underserved here, and the recruitment of these two new dermatologists marks the beginning of the long journey to address those patient needs and to build an outstanding academic dermatology program at Queen’s University.”

Still in its early days, the new Division will ramp up slowly, he says, which means patients eager for an appointment should not expect to be seen immediately.

“We’re facing a decade of need that won’t be solved overnight. We want to develop the program in a way that doesn’t swamp capacity,” he explains.

Patients will require a referral from their family physician to attend the clinic at Hotel Dieu, which is being equipped with therapeutic phototherapy technology used to treat various skin diseases and conditions such as psoriasis, eczema and skin lymphoma. At present, the clinic is targeting adults only.

The new dermatology program will unfold in three phases, starting with state-of-the-art clinical services, which will also involve creating a dermatology oncology program at the Cancer Centre. Down the line, the plan is to add surgical and cosmetic components. Dermatology training and research programs will also be established.

With 50 to 60 percent of dermatologists in Canada retiring in the next 10 years, training the next generation of specialists will be critical in the very competitive specialty, says Archer.

“As one of the best medical schools in Canada, Queen’s University should have a formal dermatology training program, and we aim to build that once we have a critical mass of dermatologists,” he says.

For the present, patients will be the big winners as the new program gets underway, says Asai, who is keenly aware of the dramatic impact of debilitating or disfiguring skin disease on quality of life.

“Patients will tell me they would much rather be in pain than suffering terribly itchy skin,” she says. “And having a condition such as psoriasis on your hands might not seem a big deal to some but it is if you’re serving food in a restaurant. There can be significant psychological and economic impacts to having a skin disease or condition.”

Archer says the new physician recruitments received strong support from the South East Local Health Integration Network, Dr. Richard Reznick, Dean of Health Sciences at Queen’s University, and Hotel Dieu senior leadership, notably CEO Dr. David Pichora and Chief of Patient Care Mike McDonald.

“We don’t want patients being forced to leave our region for this kind of care,” he says. “We want to provide cutting-edge dermatological services in Kingston because we know that a comprehensive dermatology program will make a huge difference for the thousands of people afflicted with skin diseases ranging from skin cancer to psoriasis.”

“We’re delighted by this collaboration and are looking forward to a more seamless, high-quality care experience for patients across our region,” says Brenda Carter, Regional Vice-President of Cancer Services. “These new resources mean patients with skin cancer will be guaranteed timely access to care, closer to home.”

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