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## Premier Medical brings on high-end MRI, CT systems

By JIMMY SETTLE

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Clarksville's physician-owned Premier Medical Group has invested some \$2.8 million in new diagnostic imaging technology that doctors and administrators say will help bring the best in health care services to northern middle Tennessee. Within Premier's Diagnostic Imaging Center at Governor's Square, radiological staff are now using a new LightSpeed Computed Tomography scanner, as well as an enhanced, high-definition Magnetic Resonance Imaging system.

These two new systems, acquired and installed within the past month, are some of the most sophisticated in the health care industry, experts say.

But their purpose is simple, said Premier Chief Administrator Bob McCorkle.

"In the past, there were a number of patient procedures that we were having to send to Nashville hospitals because we couldn't do them, and they couldn't be done in Clarksville.

"Now, with these systems, there's really very little that we have to send to Nashville from an imaging standpoint.

"We're really on the cutting edge now, and with the new hospital that's coming to Clarksville in about three years, we're just really excited about being able to raise the bar on the quality of health care services in this community," McCorkle said.

Beverly Taylor, Premier's director of marketing, added that the new CT and MRI systems mean "getting these procedures done quicker, and more conveniently for our patients."

The LightSpeed CT scanner, manufactured by GE Medical Systems, allows doctors to capture wafer-thin images of a patient's anatomy within seconds, shaving precious minutes off exam time.

CT exams are used when people are ill or injured or when a doctor suspects a medical problem that is not easily detected by a normal physical exam. It can provide diagnosis in a variety of anatomical areas, including the spine, head, abdomen and chest.

Separately, Premier's new Signa Excite 1.5 Tesla MRI system from GE Healthcare will provide doctors with highly detailed pictures of anatomy and pathology to help them evaluate a wide range of physical conditions, such as stroke and heart disease. Phil Fuqua, director of Premier's Imaging Center and MRI technician, said Premier has moved from a 1 to 1.5 Tesla MRI, meaning - in layman's terms - the magnetic, high-definition strength of the diagnostic system is among the best available in the industry.

And, where Premier's former CT scanner would look at an anatomical cross-section

in one slice, the new scanner can do 16 thin cross-sections, yielding a more-precise diagnosis.

"These CT scanners use X-rays to find things primarily in the bony structures of the body," said Dr. Norm Scarborough, Premier radiologist.

"The most significant thing we are capable of doing now is CT angiography, which is basically looking at the major arteries and blood vessels, such as the aorta, and blood vessels in the chest and abdomen, to find things like aneurysms," Scarborough said.

"The forte of the MRI is really its ability to detect any problems in the central nervous system, in the brain and spine. It's also good for looking at soft tissues. The 1.5 (Tesla) is faster than the 1, and enables us to get better images and more information in a scan. This is the same, exact MRI that you will find at Centennial Medical Center in Nashville.

"I think it's safe to say that this new technology is quite upscale for a smaller, physician-owned imaging center," he said.

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Photo captions:

At Premier Medical Group's Diagnostic Imaging Center at Governor's Square Mall, Dr. Norm Scarborough reviews the images of a patient's abdominal region gathered from new, high-tech CT and MRI scanners that Premier recently acquired. Robert Smith/The Leaf-Chronicle

Phil Fuqua, director of Premier Medical Group's Diagnostic Imaging Center, demonstrates Premier's new CT scanner to Austin Peay student Heather Powers. Premier has invested some \$2.8 million in new technology aimed at dramatically enhancing the quality of health care in Clarksville. Robert Smith/The Leaf-Chronicle

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