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Marketing/Community Relations

## **Shore Health Services expands cancer technology**

NASSAWADOX – A sophisticated tool to help fight cancer will be available through Shore Health Services starting this month in Nassawadox.

PET, or Positron Emission Tomography, lets doctors look inside the body in a new way, by detecting the metabolic activity of cancer cells. This detection provides the physician with additional information to more accurately treat cancer.

In the past the service has been available mainly through academic and research institutions. Shore Health Services is at the forefront in offering this technology in a community hospital setting.

The new self-contained, mobile unit – which combines PET and CT scans in one machine – will set up next to Shore Cancer Center twice a month starting June 27.

“One of the biggest assets of having it here is that it will save our cancer patients from having to go long distances to get this state-of-the-art test,” said Dr. Marcia Krebs, medical director at Shore Cancer Center.

Shore Health Services got the green light for the PET/CT scan following a lengthy approval process with the Virginia Department of Health.

Officials opted for a mobile unit because it was cost-effective and would allow for easy upgrades as the technology advances.

Shore Health Services’ facilities – including Shore Memorial Hospital and Shore Cancer Center – typically diagnose or treat about 250 cancer patients per year.

The PET technology is a powerful tool because by detecting metabolic activity it can show malignant tumors – while the CT part of the scan provides precise anatomical images. “We’re using these more and more as part of our evaluation of cancer patients and their treatments,” said Dr. Drury Stith, an oncologist at Shore Cancer Center. “If you see a lymph

node on the CT scan, the fact that you see it doesn't tell you if it's malignant or not. (PET) looks at tissues in a different way.”

The treatment begins when a patient is injected with a tiny amount of radioactive glucose, which is absorbed by any cancer cells in the body. A PET scan then reveals the areas where cancer is concentrated, differentiating between malignant or benign tumors.

The radioactive effect quickly wears off, making the procedure harmless to the patient.

Having access to PET technology may eliminate the need, in some cases, for more invasive procedures. “Many times it would save us biopsies,” Krebs said, because doctors would no longer need to physically remove tissue to determine if a tumor is malignant.

The PET technology will also help track the progress of ongoing radiation or chemotherapy in patients who have already been diagnosed with cancer.

PET scans have been approved for detecting other diseases as well, so the new unit may have even wider applications in the future. Studies are under way to determine how PET technology may help heart disease and Alzheimer's patients.

Shore Health Services is the only locally based, nonprofit healthcare network on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

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*Shore Health Services is an integrated healthcare delivery organization that includes Shore Memorial Hospital, Shore LifeCare at Parksley, Shore Rehab, Shore Cardiopulmonary Wellness Services, Shore Healthcare at Home, Shore Cancer Center, School of Practical Nursing, Shore Medical Center at Metompkin, Lingle & Goldstein Surgical Associates, Shore Orthopedic Associates and Senior Perspectives.  
For more information call Shore Health Services at 442-2013.*