

April 18, 2010

Rehab system for Canadian soldiers coming to Edmonton

By CANDICE WARD, QMI Agency

EDMONTON - A world-class rehabilitation simulator system for Canada's world-class soldiers will be coming to the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in early 2011, officials say.

Funded by the government, the \$1.5-million computer-assisted rehabilitation environment (CAREN) system is promised to take rehab to a new level for Canadian soldiers and the general public.

"Our government believes that in addition to receiving the best equipment and support, (the military) also deserve the best possible medical care," said National Defence Minister Peter MacKay, who made the announcement at the Glenrose on Sunday.

The Canadian Forces has been working with the Glenrose for a number of years in the care of wounded soldiers and this new system will be shared between both for military personnel and civilians from across western Canada.

"The CAREN system is a state-of-the-art technology that provides therapy for soldiers requiring physical and mental rehabilitation," said MacKay.

The CAREN system will see patients on a three-metre round moving platform executing tasks in real-time "emerged in a virtual world." Skills such as driving, skiing and manoeuvring through water can even be simulated through this system.

This system can be used by a wide range of patients including amputees, patients in wheelchairs, those with spinal cord injuries and those suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It reintroduces the patient to the complexities of the real world in a safe and controlled manner," said MacKay. "(The CAREN system) will impact significantly on the quality of life of those who have access to it."

Commodore Hans Jung, Canadian Forces Surgeon General said: "It really pushes the envelope in both in terms of circumstances you can get into but also the pace of advancement. This is truly a transformative technology."

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology also announced it is kicking in \$250,000 from its Innovation Agency Project Grant to help with operational costs of the CAREN system.

"The technology will engage our patients at a whole new level and boost their progress through the rehabilitation journey," said Isabel Henderson, vice president of the Glenrose.

Another CAREN system will open at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre early next year, too, to serve eastern Canada.



National Defence Minister Peter MacKay announces Sunday morning that a computer-assisted rehabilitation environment, or CAREN, system, will be up and running at Glenrose early next year. (JASON FRANSON/QMI Agency)