

Medical isotope imports boost supply

Medical isotopes are now vital to modern society ... you better be able to produce them.

Nine MSN
June 19, 2006

Australia's supply of an isotope used for medical scans is improving after production was disrupted following an accident at Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney.

Overseas shipments of a key radiopharmaceutical used to diagnose and treat people with diseases such as cancer arrived at the weekend, and another is due on Tuesday, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) says.

Production and supply of the isotope ceased over a week ago after a pipe ruptured in a production area at Sydney's Lucas Heights Reactor – one of four accidents within a week at the reactor.

An ANSTO spokeswoman said the imported product would significantly improve supply to patients waiting for nuclear medicine procedures, with clinics and hospitals around the country estimated to receive around 60 per cent of their orders this week.

Further imports were due to arrive on June 24 which would enable ANSTO to meet 100 per cent demand, the spokeswoman said.

Investigations were still underway into what happened at the Lucas Height reactor and it was not yet known when production of the isotope in Australia would resume, the ANSTO spokeswoman said.

"ANSTO is keeping all customers – including doctors, medical centres and hospitals – fully informed of the situation, so that clinic schedules can be adapted to meet priority community needs," ANSTO said in a statement.

"ANSTO regrets the disruption that this situation has caused and will continue to provide updates about the situation to ensure the public and clients are kept informed."