

Long Island hospital to shutter nuclear medicine department after years of referral declines

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Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, in Greenport, will no longer offer nuclear medicine services, saying that the hospital is looking to invest in more widely used services, and that decreases in referrals have made the cost of maintaining the department no longer justifiable.

Over the next 18 months, the provider will remove its nuclear medicine equipment and dispose of any nuclear liquids or materials used by it for exams. It plans to expand its sonography services in the repurposed space, according to the Suffolk Times.

“Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital has made the strategic decision to close its Nuclear Medicine Department to optimize resources and align services with current demands,” Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital officials told HCB News.

Hospital executives explained their decision earlier this month at a town hall meeting. According to Paul Connor, chief administrative officer, patient



throughput in nuclear medicine departments should average between 400 and 500 annually, whereas SBELIH saw only 58 in 2022.

“Let’s say because we’re small we have maybe 250 or 300 visits; we could live with that, but it’s not going to happen,” Connor said. “The equipment is reaching the end of life.”

Maintaining the departments scanners and other machinery has cost the hospital roughly \$400,000 to \$600,000 over the last few years, but the low number of referrals makes it “fiscally irresponsible” to continue to pay this much or replace these machines, said Connor.

Additionally, technological advancements in medical imaging have made nuclear medicine tests obsolete to a point, says Anne McDonald-Horan, the hospital’s director of radiology, who referred to PET scans at the meeting as “the golden standard,” reported the Suffolk Times.

SBELIH is managed by the governing body of Stony Brook University Hospital and runs a full-service imaging department, offering MR, CT, sonography, and bone density exams, among others. It also has added a Wound Care Center to expand outpatient services to the North Fork and Shelter Island and is raising funds to expand its emergency room in 2025.

Before the hospital can begin the decommissioning process, it must submit the proper documentation to New York state.

The shutdown will not affect staff employment, according to Connor, and patients in need of nuclear medicine exams will be referred to Stony Brook Southampton or Stony Brook University Hospital.