

Five more MRIs to be allowed in outlying hospitals

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Following a report by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel that stated that advanced medical equipment is unfairly distributed in the country - with periphery areas having difficulty getting access to CT, MRI and other scanners, Health Ministry director-general Prof. Avi Yisraeli said Tuesday that "within a few days" five additional MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) scans would be "distributed" via a tender, with preference given to hospitals in outlying areas.

MRIs are routinely used to diagnose serious illness. But people in the North and South have to travel long distances for a scan, while the expensive devices are much more common in the center of the country.

Yisraeli made this commitment after a query at the Knesset Labor, Social Affairs and

Health Committee by Dr. Yuval Livnat of PHR-Israel, who presented data to the committee about the inequity.

The director-general put some of the blame on the Treasury, which claimed that the existence of advanced scanners in some locations artificially "creates demand" for such services and is "not economic." The Treasury, for example, opposes the installation of an MRI at Poriya Medical Center in Tiberias.

NU-NRP MK Arye Eldad, a physician by profession, said that in the last decade, there has been a growing understanding of the importance of MRIs in diagnosing disease early. He called on the Treasury to abandon its opposition to the purchase and installation of MRIs in the periphery.

PHR-Israel congratulated the Health Ministry for its willingness for outlying hospitals to receive MRIs.