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Commercial Products' story – the development of medical therapy for millions

Commercial Products, which has been recognized during its quarter-century of existence as a world leader in the field of radiation technology, came into being in 1946 as a division of Eldorado Mining and Refining Company Limited, a crown corporation formed during the Second World War to control Canada's uranium resources. The main task of CP, under its founder Roy Errington, was the marketing of radium used in cancer treatment. Towards the end of 1948, the stock of radium had become practically used up.

As early as 1945, J.S. Mitchell and J.V. Dunworth had recognized that cobalt-60 would have useful medical applications. Though they discussed its potential use with associates, they lacked a reactor with a high density of neutrons (high neutron flux) to convert ordinary cobalt to cobalt-60. The required flux became available when the NRX reactor was brought into service in July 1947.

Errington's group took on the task of

designing and building an entirely new product, the therapy unit, a device needed for the use of this new source of energy. The personal confidence of Dr. Ivan Smith, expressed by a firm order for a unit to be installed at London, Ontario, did much to bring this venture to fruition.

Meanwhile, another Canadian pioneer, Dr. Harold Johns of the Saskatchewan Cancer Clinic, was busy preparing a machine for his own use. Cobalt-60 sources for both these units were produced at Chalk River, Ontario.

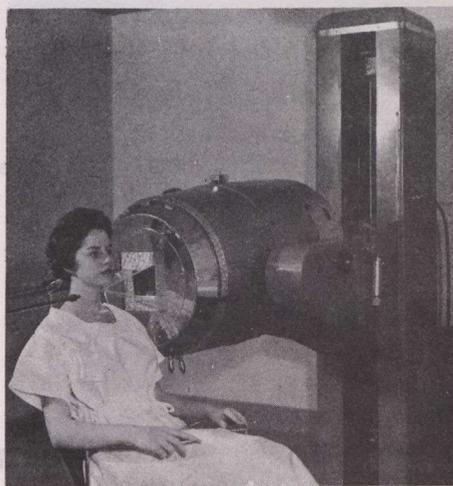
Historic day

Finally, the history-making day arrived and the world's first commercial cobalt-60 teletherapy machine, the Eldorado A, was commissioned on November 12, 1951, at the London Clinic of the Ontario Cancer Foundation, Victoria Hospital. Subsequently, 50 Eldorado A units were built and sold by Commercial Products and many are still in service. From this humble beginning came 1,500 AECL cobalt-60 teletherapy units installed in 73 countries and providing therapy treatment for millions of patients.

During this early period, CP occupied some interesting premises, starting life in Number 3 Temporary Building on Wellington Street in Ottawa. During the development of the Eldorado Model A., CP moved to "spacious" new facilities in the basement of the R.A. Beamish store on the Montreal Road. It also had a workshop in a small garage. In 1950, an isotope catalogue had been produced and the processing of orders was handled by a special-products group at Eldorado Mining and Refining in Port Hope, Ontario.

AECL takes over

With the formation of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited in 1952, Commercial Products became a division of the new company. The production unit was moved to new rented quarters, built to its own specifications, in the west end of Ottawa. The total staff at that time was 20. In 1953, another CP group was



Two Canadian cobalt-60 cancer therapy machines were the first in the world to go into service. Above is the unit developed by the Commercial Products division of Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited (the division in 1952 became part of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, established that year) and put into operation on November 12, 1951 at the London Clinic of the Ontario Cancer Foundation, Victoria Hospital.

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