

May 13, 2005

Grant program continues to expand Alberta's telehealth network

Edmonton... Twenty-one telehealth initiatives across Alberta will benefit from over \$2.6 million in funding over the next two years through the Telehealth Clinical Services Grant Fund. The fund supports new telehealth programs that allow Albertans, regardless of location, to have access to needed medical professionals and specialists.

"Telehealth is an important tool to help ensure that Albertans have the best possible access to healthcare services regardless of where they live," said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness. "Today's recipients are helping to expand services available through telehealth and reduce the impact that geography has on health care access."

The fund will provide grants to initiatives in six of the province's health regions as well as the Alberta Mental Health Board and the Alberta Cancer Board. Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch is also contributing to grant funding, ensuring nine telehealth programs are extended to First Nations communities. The scope of programs receiving grants will cover a broad spectrum of medical fields including adolescent psychiatry, smoking cessation, cardiology, rural health and chronic disease management. As telehealth services are not limited to where these initiatives are based, patients from the entire province stand to benefit from these programs.

"Alberta is quickly becoming a leader in telehealth and that is being recognized across Canada. This provincial forum is an opportunity for people to share their experiences and learn new ways to incorporate telehealth opportunities into their care practices. The innovative ways we have found to utilize our telehealth network is constantly breaking new ground," said Pearl Babiuk, Chair of the Provincial Telehealth Committee.

Recipients of the grants and many other healthcare professionals from across the province will meet this summer in Calgary for the Second Provincial Clinical Telehealth Forum. The forum showcases the clinical accomplishments made over the last year and recognizes the success Alberta has had in advancing telehealth on a national level.

Telehealth allows healthcare providers to examine patients through the innovative use of videoconferencing and specialized medical equipment. Through telehealth, direct medical consultation is possible without the clinician and patient being in the same place.

Alberta's telehealth network includes over 200 telehealth sites across the province, including 25 that offer tele-ultrasound and radiology services. Among the many benefits of telehealth are:

- Convenient access to distant clinical expertise
- Confidential care through a secure network
- Improved specialty assessment and care
- Improved clinical and education supports for practitioners.

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

Access is available on-line at <http://www.health.gov.ab.ca>

Background

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Telehealth Clinical Services Grant Fund Recipients

| Health Region | Program | Description | Amount |
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| Chinook Health Region Contact: Louise Wilson (403) 382-6227 | | | |
| With Calgary, Health Canada | Maximizing Utilization of Specialty Assessment Resources Across the Continuum of Care: An Inter and Intra-Regional Approach | Telehealth technology will be used to provide specialized health care services including pre-screening, assessment, consultation and follow-up involving following areas: geriatrics, chronic disease programs, rehabilitation (e.g. speech and seating assessments), mental health, enteralstomal therapy, wound management and palliative care. | \$167,097 |

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| Calgary Health Region Contact: James Finstad (403) 943-1212 | | | |
| With Chinook, David Thompson, Health Canada | Arthritis Consultation Program for Southern Alberta | A specialist /client rheumatology consultation telehealth service for arthritis patients living in 4 rural AB communities will be established providing: an innovative response to the issue of limited rheumatology specialty manpower, mentorship for primary care colleagues and expertise within the allied health community. | \$129,305 |
| | Calgary Health Region Department of Medicine Regional Chronic Disease Management & Enhanced Transitional Patient Care | An existing telehealth program will be augmented, increasing access to specialist services for rural Albertans and developing a comprehensive multidisciplinary team approach for chronic disease management. For example, prior to discharge of complicated medical patients to their home community, multisite care teams will ensure optimal care, improved support to rural providers and seamless transition. | \$200,000 |
| | Rural Palliative Telehealth Project | Palliative patients in hospitals, ambulatory care settings and at home will receive consultation support by a clinical nurse specialist and palliative care consultant physician, thereby reducing travel requirements for patients who often experience pain and fatigue with movement. Telehealth will also facilitate case conferencing between providers. | \$133,643 |
| With Chinook, Palliser, David Thompson | Enhancing Transition for the Neonatal Population of Southern Alberta Through Telehealth | Telehealth strategies will be used to increase consistency and continuity of care for very low birth weight babies (under 1.5 Kilograms) who have spent considerable time in Calgary neonatal intensive care centers and special care nurseries who are ready to return to their home community or a regional care center. | \$100,000 |
| With Chinook, Palliser, Health Canada, David Thompson | Development of a Multiregional, Multidisciplinary Children's Telemental Health Service for Southern Alberta | The proposed service will establish and use, via telehealth technology, multidisciplinary interregional teams to provide locally accessible consultation, assessment, and community case planning services for children and youth with complex mental health needs. | \$184,000 |
| David Thompson Health Region Contact: Elaine McFadden (403) 341-8625 | | | |
| With Alberta Mental Health, Health Canada | Community Discharge Planning and Follow-up | This project will use videoconferencing and videophone technology to put in place community based supports to decrease utilization of high-cost inpatient psychiatric services for clients who have frequently accessed this service. | \$49,946 |

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| | Using SuperNet to Provide Teleorthopedic Consultations | This initiative will result in the development of a telehealth orthopedic consultation service utilizing physician to physician videoconferencing and an intranet based exchange of radiographic images using SuperNet. | \$91,720 |
| Capital Health Contact: Charlie Fleet (780) 407-2606 | | | |
| With Aspen, David Thompson, Health Canada, Northern Lights, Peace Country | Telehealth Access to Urogynecology Expertise | This initiative will provide Nurse Continence Advisor services to remote/rural patients through the use of telehealth technologies which will be used to provide individual patient consults, group patient education sessions and rural physician/care provider training and problem solving. | \$172,208 |
| With Aspen, East Central, Health Canada, Peace Country | Using Telehealth to Improve Care to COPD Patients in Central and Northern Alberta | This initiative will provide a comprehensive pulmonary rehabilitation program accessible to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients in rural, remote and First Nations communities through the use of telehealth technologies. | \$181,224 |
| With David Thompson, East Central | Telehealth Digital Cardiac Exam | Building on the existing Cardiac EASE Telehealth program, this initiative will add technology to dramatically increase diagnostic certainty by providing the ability to auscultate (listen to) the heart/ lungs and review electrocardiogram, chest x-ray and stress testing data. Expected outcome is timely assessment and appropriate triaging of patients until an actual diagnosis can be made. | \$174,982 |

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| With Aspen, David Thompson, Northern Lights | Therapeutic Intervention for Pediatric Patients with Sleep Disturbances | This project will provide a team approach to behavioral sleep problems for children who also have an identified chronic or acute medical problem. Telehealth technology will be used to provide families with individualized behavioral treatment for sleep problems and build skills and capacity in regional centers. | \$177,494 |
| Northern Lights Health Region Contact: Melissa Pennell (780) 791-6018 | | | |
| With Alberta Mental Health | Rainbow Lake Health Center - Clinical Telehealth Access to Services | Through the use of telehealth technologies, Albertans living in the remote community of Rainbow Lake will have access to clinical programs that previously were unavailable including: physician consultation, mental health consultation and pediatric services. | \$58,112 |
| | Telehome Care in the Northern Lights Health Region | This proposal extends an existing telehome care program to remote locations in the eastern part of the region. Telehealth will be used to enhance existing services, improve client self care and health outcomes by providing clients and families with registered nurse access for chronic care needs and for pain and symptom control for palliative care client needs. | \$123,830 |
| Peace Country Health Contact: Vicki Swan (780) 538-6181 | | | |
| and Alberta Mental Health with Capital Health | Enabling the Delivery of Forensic Telemental Health Services from a Satellite Clinic | This initiative will extend delivery of forensic mental health services from Grande Prairie, providing counseling to clients residing in rural and remote communities. The technology will also connect Grande Prairie based | \$74,208 |

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| | | clinicians and PCHR clients with more specialized resources located in Edmonton (e.g. forensic mental health psychiatrists, psychologists...) | |
| Alberta Mental Health Board Contact: Val Nakonechny (780) 917-4117 | | | |
| With Capital, Aspen, Northern Lights, East Central, David Thompson, Peace Country | Family Therapy Capacity Building for Mental Health Practitioners | This capacity building initiative will develop specialized clinical skills among practitioners living in geographically remote areas. Expertise of a multidisciplinary team including senior psychiatrists and therapists will be shared through interactive learning/ observation/ mentoring sessions. | \$53,639 |
| With Calgary, Health Canada | Extending Forensic Mental Health Service to Bears paw First Nation | Telehealth technology will be used to address current limitations in access to forensic mental health service in the community of Bears paw. To date, clients from Bears paw have been required to travel to the nearest Regional telehealth site (Black Diamond) to receive this specialize service. Limited on and off reserve transportation infrastructure makes it difficult for clients from Bears paw to receive services. | \$68,840 |
| With Capital, Aspen, Northern Lights, East Central, David Thompson, Peace Country | Child/ Adolescent Telepsychiatry Outreach | This initiative will facilitate the expansion of existing child/ adolescent telepsychiatry by optimizing the referral and consultation process with the next result of reducing wait times and increasing opportunity for Albertans to access mental health services in their home community. | \$173,650 |
| Alberta Cancer Board Contact: Trish Filevich (780) 722-9646 | | | |

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| With Capital, Peace Country, David Thompson, Calgary, Chinook, Palliser, Health Canada | Telehealth Lung Cancer Triage and Follow-up Clinic | Comprehensive lung cancer services will be delivered provincially through telehealth (videoconferencing) with an emphasis on service integration and improved care processes. The multidisciplinary team of specialists with the remote site clinicians, conference with patients in their home communities and make treatment or follow-up decisions all at once. | \$196,312 |
| With Calgary, Health Canada | Tom Baker Cancer Centre Smoking Cessation Rural Telehealth Initiative | This project will use telehealth technology to extend effective behavioral smoking cessation programming to clients located in rural regions of Alberta. | \$96,952 |
| | A Telehealth Support Group for Allogenic Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) and Stem Cell Transplant (SCT) Survivors | This program will use telehealth technology to enhance access to post transplant care for allogenic BMT/ SCT survivors for clients living outside of Calgary. The program consists of psychoeducational support group intervention. | \$20,069 |
| TOTAL | | | \$2,627,231 |