

February 13, 2007

Technology brings health care specialists closer to home
Thirty-two new projects enhance Alberta's telehealth network

Edmonton... Albertans living in rural and remote areas will have better access to health care services such as chronic disease management, mental health care, cancer care and hospital follow up, thanks to technology that links specialists and patients.

The Clinical Telehealth Innovation Program will provide more than \$3.4 million in new funding for 32 new projects over the next two years, with the Alberta government and Canada Health Infoway investing more than \$1.7 million each. Through the use of videoconferencing technology and specialized medical equipment telehealth enables direct medical consultation without the need to have the health professional and patient in the same place.

"The Alberta telehealth network is an important part of our strategy to improve access to health services for rural Albertans," said Dave Hancock, Minister of Health and Wellness. "These new projects will allow more people to receive a wide range of specialist services in locations that are closer to where they live."

As part of Premier Ed Stelmach's commitment to Improving Albertans' Quality of Life, all nine health regions, as well as the Alberta Mental Health Board and the Alberta Cancer Board have received increased funding to expand access through telehealth projects.

"The telehealth network is an outstanding example of how innovation can improve access to healthcare services in Canada," said Richard Alvarez, President and CEO of Canada Health Infoway, a not-for-profit organization which invests with public sector partners to accelerate electronic health records across Canada. "Congratulations to Alberta for recognizing the potential of telehealth and driving it forward for the benefit of patients across the province."

Alberta's telehealth network is one of the largest in Canada and includes more than 200 telehealth sites across the province. Among the many benefits of telehealth are:

- Convenient, confidential and secure access to distant clinical specialist expertise and care, particularly for residents living in rural and remote areas.
- Improved clinical and education support for health care professionals in their own community.

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Backgrounder

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Clinical Telehealth Innovation Program Recipients

Health Region	Project	Description	Amount
Chinook Health Region Contact: Louise Wilson (403) 388-6227			\$177,020
In partnership with - Calgary Health Region - Health Canada, Kainai & Peigan Health Centers	Wound Management	The service will provide patients in Chinook Region with ongoing care of acute and chronic wounds. The project will support early discharge of patients, increase continuity of care, decrease admissions/readmissions to hospital, and increase compliance with wound management protocols. This project will support patient consultations and learning opportunities for community care workers.	
	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
Palliser Health Region Contact: Sheri Wright (403) 502-8169			\$100,000
	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
Calgary Health Region Contact: Don Stewart (403) 943-1210			\$712,806
In partnership with - Chinook - David Thompson	Arthritis Consultation	This service is designed to provide arthritis patients in rural southern Alberta with increased access to rheumatology specialist care and will reduce unnecessary patient travel. In addition, formal training to	

- Health Canada		medical and allied health professionals will help serve the rural clinics.	
	Rural Palliative	This service will increase access to care for palliative patients in their home communities in rural Calgary Health Region through links with Alberta Cancer Board, the Tertiary Palliative Care Unit and Chronic Disease Management services. Rural care team will also benefit from clinical education sessions.	
In partnership with - Chinook	Chronic Disease Management and Enhanced Transitional Patient Care	This service is designed to increase access to specialist care and education for local providers and patients with diabetes and chronic disease conditions associated with diabetes living in Calgary and Chinook. The project will help improve communication between Calgary and rural care teams to allow patients to transition more easily to their rural communities.	
In partnership with - Chinook - Palliser	Tele-rehabilitation: Outpatient Care for Stroke Patients	This service will provide stroke survivors living in the rural Calgary Health region, Palliser or Chinook with specialist, multi-disciplinary stroke rehabilitation services. Rural providers will also receive the benefits of mentorship, education and consultations from these specialists.	
	Surgical Services by Telehealth Closer to Home	This project will provide a number of services including pre-operative and post-operative care to patients and their families in the areas of breast health, breast cancer, hernia repair and cholecystectomies.	
David Thompson Health Region Contact: Rennie Brown (403) 341-8622			\$657,124
In partnership with - East Central	Management of Heart Failure and Stroke	Provide access to interdisciplinary clinical expertise regarding disease management and risk reduction strategies and provide education to patients, families, and health care providers regarding the pathology, diagnostic methods, pharmacological treatments, lifestyle issues, symptom	

		management, and social aspects of heart failure and stroke.	
In partnership with - Alberta Mental Health Board - Health Canada	Community Discharge Planning & Follow-Up	These services will help to reintegrate patients of Alberta Hospital Ponoka into their community and ensure local mental health services are optimized.	
• In partnership with Capital Calgary	Enhancing Discharge for Children	This project will improve the continuity, consistency and quality of care for high needs children who are transitioned into Red Deer Regional Hospital from an urban facility, and then reintegrated into their home communities.	
	Teleorthopedic Consultations	Rural physicians in David Thompson will receive advice on managing their orthopedic cases from an orthopedic surgeon. This will minimize ambulance transfers and allow patients to wait for surgery at home. It also gives opportunity for an orthopedic surgeon to complete a post-op follow up visit while the patient remains in their home town.	
	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
East Central Health Region: Jim Durham (780) 608-8804			\$100,000
	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
Capital Health Contact: Mike Diesing (780) 407-2602			\$539,351

<p>In partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspen - East Central - Health Canada (First Nations Inuit Health Branch) - Peace Country - David Thompson 	<p>Using Telehealth to Improve Care to COPD Patients in Central and Northern Alberta</p>	<p>This project provides care to patients who have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The clinic is being offered by the Centre for Lung Health, operated by the Caritas Health Group with telehealth support from Capital Health. It is the only specialized pulmonary rehabilitation program for patients residing in Central and Northern Alberta.</p>	
<p>In partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -David Thompson - East Central - Aspen 	<p>Telehealth Digital Cardiac Exam</p>	<p>This project is an extension of the TeleCardiac Ensuring Access and Speedy Evaluation (EASE) program. Through telehealth technology, a digital smart stethoscope is used to hear heart sounds of cardiac patients. It offers therapeutic interventions and follow-up consultations to out of region patients.</p>	
<p>In partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - East Central - Aspen - Northern Lights - David Thompson - Peace Country 	<p>Enhancing Epilepsy Care through Telehealth</p>	<p>This project is a clinical service offered through the Comprehensive Epilepsy Program at the University of Alberta Hospital, which is a major epilepsy referral centre for Western Canadian patients.</p>	
<p>In partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspen - David Thompson - East Central - Health Canada - Northern Lights - Peace Country 	<p>Telehealth Access to Urogynecology Expertise</p>	<p>This project offers specialized continence care and education to patients in Central and Northern Alberta. A nurse continence advisor provides consultations, education and follow-up sessions to patients who have incontinence.</p>	
<p>In partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - David Thompson - Aspen 	<p>Therapeutic Intervention for Pediatric Patients with Sleep Disturbances</p>	<p>This project is offered to children with behavioural sleep problems or identified medical problems that may be causing a sleep disturbance.</p>	

- Northern Lights - Peace Country - East Central			
Co-lead by: - Aspen	Aspen Regional Health Authority / Capital Health TeleOphthalmology Program	This program provides remote eye screening and assessments for a number of retinal and non-retinal problems (diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration).	
Aspen Health Region Contact: Anita Puddicombe (780) 350-3003			\$100,000
	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
Peace Health Region Contact: Deb Guerette (780) 538-6181			\$597,455
	Tele-chronic Disease Management	Patients with diabetes, cardiac disease or at risk for stroke will receive regular follow-up care and education from a multi-disciplinary team of physiotherapists, dietitians, nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists and physicians.	
In partnership with - Alberta Mental Health Board with - Capital Health	Forensic Tele-mental Health	Patients in conflict with the law suffering from mental health problems and living in remote communities in the region will be able to receive access to specialized mental health services.	
	Interdisciplinary Tele-mental Health Project	This service will provide improved access to psychiatry and mental health specialists (such as neuropsychology, eating disorders) as well as clinical supervision for therapists in rural hospitals.	

	Rural Change Management	Funding will help create policies and procedures, training and communication plans, and training guidelines for staff to provide enhanced telehealth services.	
Northern Lights Health Region Contact: Lorraine Lynch (780) 791-6018			\$228,400
	Tele-homecare	This expansion of a home telehealth project will enhance services available to early discharge clients, frail elderly and other chronic care clients in Fort McMurray and introduce services to the western part of the Northern Lights Health Region.	
In partnership with - Alberta Mental Health Board	Rainbow Lake Access to Services	This remote community receives family physician services from a doctor who travels to the community once every two weeks. Unfortunately, the schedule can be disrupted due to bad weather or poor road conditions. This service will improve access to a variety of health services for residents.	
	Rural Change Management	Funding will be provided to secure a site, equipment and staff to support participation in current and future province-wide telehealth services.	
Alberta Mental Health Board Contact: Tim Bulger (780) 917-4107			\$113,838
In partnership with - Capital - Aspen - Northern Lights - East Central - David Thompson - Peace Country	Family Therapy Capacity Building	This project will support rural practitioners by providing learning sessions, observation, feedback and mentoring to enhance their skills and help them assess and treat their clients.	

<p>In partnership with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital - Aspen - Northern Lights - East Central - David Thompson - Peace Country 	<p>Child/Adolescent Tele-psychiatry</p>	<p>This service will use child psychiatrists, physician specialists, psychologists, mental health therapists and other health professionals to deliver mental health services to Albertans 18 years of age and under, including children requiring mental health assessment or follow-up consultation.</p>	
<p>Alberta Cancer Board Contact: Lee Elliott (780) 409-5715</p>			<p>\$56,615</p>
<p>In partnership with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calgary - Health Canada 	<p>Tom Baker Cancer Centre Smoking Cessation Rural Telehealth Initiative</p>	<p>This project will deliver the highly successful Tom Baker Cancer Centre Smoking Cessation Program to smokers in rural Alberta who would otherwise not be able to access it. The program has assisted over 6,000 people quit smoking since it started in 1983. To date 78 rural participants from 12 sites (seven regions and Yellowknife) have attended the program via Telehealth.</p>	
	<p>Telehealth Support Group for Allogenic Bone Marrow and Transplant (BMT) and Stem Cell (SCT) Survivors</p>	<p>This service will provide access to a multi-disciplinary team to patients from all over Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan who are recovering from allogenic bone marrow and stem cell transplant treatments received at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre. The expectation is that this service will ease post transplant adjustment issues and support patients as they enter a healthy post treatment life.</p>	
<p>TOTAL</p>			<p>\$3,382,629</p>

About Canada Health Infoway

Infoway is an independent not-for-profit organization that invests with public sector partners across Canada to implement and reuse compatible health information systems which support a safer, more efficient healthcare system. These systems provide healthcare professionals with rapid access to complete and accurate patient information, enabling better decisions about treatment and diagnosis. The result is a sustainable, healthcare system offering improved quality, accessibility and productivity.

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