

Improving Albertans' quality of life

June 1, 2007

Technology to improve stroke care to remote areas

New investment to enhance Alberta's stroke care network

Edmonton... Albertans living in rural and remote areas will have better access to stroke diagnosis and treatment services through an investment of close to \$1.1 million from Canada Health Infoway in the province-wide network that links stroke specialists and patients.

The Telestroke program will provide funding to participating health regions to expand the use of videoconferencing technology and other specialized equipment to enable direct medical consultation without the need to have the health professional and patient in the same place.

"Our Telestroke program has already demonstrated many examples of faster diagnosis and treatment, as well as improved outcomes for stroke patients in rural Alberta," said Dave Hancock, Minister of Health and Wellness. "This investment will build on our strong Telehealth network that bridges the physical distance between patients and specialist services."

The Telestroke program supports the Alberta Provincial Stroke Strategy, which is a collaborative partnership between government, regional health authorities and the Alberta Heart and Stroke Foundation to reduce the rate of strokes and improve acute treatment, rehabilitation care and outcomes for patients.

"Alberta's Telestroke program is one of many revolutionary initiatives that are modernizing patient care across 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. "This project will provide patients with quick access to stroke diagnosis and treatment closer to home, resulting in improved outcomes and increased efficiency."

Improving stroke care supports Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to improve Albertans' quality of life. Other priorities for the government are to: govern with integrity and transparency, manage growth pressures, build a stronger Alberta and provide safe and secure communities.

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

Backgrounder

June 1, 2007

Alberta Provincial Stroke Strategy

Under the Alberta Provincial Stroke Strategy, all nine Alberta health regions have primary stroke centres that can access stroke specialist consultation by telehealth links to the main stroke centres of Calgary and Edmonton. The program includes clinics to prevent strokes, medical and neurological consultations for patient care following a stroke, as well as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, speech pathology and psychological support during rehabilitation. Telehealth is also used to deliver educational sessions for health professionals in various practice settings across the province.

Telestroke Innovation Program Recipients

Chinook Health (\$110,490)

Media contact: Tara Grindle (403) 388 6533

This initiative will enable 24-hour hyperacute service delivery in Lethbridge. Additional telestroke services include: neurotrauma, rehabilitation and education sessions for patients and providers. Technology will also be used for trauma consultations.

Northern Lights Health Region (\$104,180)

Media contact: Gaitane Villeneuve (780) 791 6018

Funding will help to implement technology for hyperacute services in Fort McMurray. Other telehealth services will include public and provider education sessions on stroke prevention and best practices, as well as rehabilitation consultations.

Peace Country Health (\$93,260)

Media contact: Deb Guerette (780) 538 6181

Funding will provide telehealth and related technologies to establish hyperacute telestroke service delivery in Grande Prairie. Other telehealth services will include rehabilitation and prevention consultations and stroke care education sessions.

Aspen Regional Health (\$295,390)

Media contact: Scott Donaldson (780) 349 5716 ext 228

This project will support implementation and delivery of hyperacute telestroke services at three sites in the health region. Other telestroke services will include rehabilitation consultations, stroke screening and triage, education and staff mentoring. Technology will also be used for additional clinical applications such as occupational therapy.

East Central Health (\$101,260)

Media contact: Jim Durham (780) 608 8804

Telestroke funding will be used to provide hyperacute services to Albertans at two centres in the health region. Other telestroke services will include primary and secondary prevention clinic and rehabilitation consultations as well as education and mentoring sessions.

Palliser Health Region (\$51,000)

Media contact: Sheri Wright (403) 502 8619

This project will support regional hyperacute service delivery and enable augmentation of stroke rehabilitation services and educational offerings for patients and providers.

Capital Health (\$132,180)

Media contact: Steve Buick (780)

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Funding will support hyperacute service delivery to partner regions in central and northern Alberta. Existing telestroke services including rehabilitation, stroke prevention clinical assessments and follow-ups, as well as educational services will be enhanced.

David Thompson Health Region (\$150,100)

Media contact: Glenda Vardy Dell (403) 343 4527

This project will support implementation of technology for acute stroke services, enable greater participation in stroke education opportunities and improve access to stroke rehabilitation and stroke prevention services.

Alberta's Telehealth Network

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; and,
- improved clinical and education support for health care professionals in their own community.

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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