



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
HEART INSTITUTE
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

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University of Ottawa Heart Institute's Telehealth Model Cuts Re-Admission for Heart Failure by 54%

OTTAWA – July 9, 2009 --- A Canadian one-of-a-kind home telehealth monitoring program developed by the University of Ottawa Heart Institute (UOHI) has cut hospital readmission by 54% for heart failure patients. The program has also been shown to save up to \$20,000 for each patient safely diverted from an Emergency Department visit, re-admission and hospital stay.

The program serves as a bellwether in effective new forms of care and treatment in the face of growing demand for health care and escalating medical costs. Heart failure is considered among the most challenging, complex forms of heart disease normally requiring significant resources. With the Heart Institute program, health dollars are saved while quality of life and quality of care are improved by supervising patients by daily remote contact.

“Heart failure is a growing burden with substantial health care costs that we can reduce through prompt intervention. A very common problem is compliance among patients who leave hospital then stop taking their medication. They get sick again, arrive at the Emergency Room and end up back in hospital,” said Christine Struthers, Advanced Practice Nurse of Cardiac Telehealth, UOHI.

More than 500 heart failure patients have been followed by the Heart Institute since 2005. Each day, patients measure and send their vital signs – from weight to heart rate and medication side effects – to the Heart Institute. The Institute also employs an automated calling system that reaches out to patients for surgical follow up, heart failure and coronary conditions ranging from chest pain to heart attack.

To evaluate home monitoring, Heart Institute researchers tracked 121 heart failure patients in 2007-2008. Of these, 69.4% were readmitted at least once in the six-month period before being followed by telehealth monitoring. Readmission fell to 14.8% in the six-month period after the patients were tracked via telehealth monitoring – a drop of 54%.

Other types of telehealth services operate in a few other parts of the country. The Heart Institute program differs by providing daily remote nursing supervision for people with severe conditions who need close medical attention. First developed for regional use, the Heart Institute's cardiac telehealth services now support nearly 1,200 patients from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador along with satellite sites in 13 hospitals in the Ottawa region.

“Home monitoring allows hospitals to stay connected with these patients, who are taught to measure and report their own vital signs everyday. Patients are able to stay home and participate in their own care. This provides them with a better measure of control over their own lives,” said Struthers.

Patients are closely followed by the Heart Institute for up to three months after they are discharged. They check and transmit their measurements daily at a prearranged time and data is transmitted by telephone to the Central Monitoring Station at the Heart Institute. A nurse will call immediately if any information is questionable or if a patient calls for help.

“Because of this monitoring system, I’ve got a good track on my numbers – blood pressure and weight. This is something I do as soon as I get out of bed every morning,” said Bruce Carter, a patient who lived in Barry’s Bay, Ontario (about 120 kilometres west of Ottawa) when he was referred to the Heart Institute.

In the Ottawa region, other hospitals serving as satellite centres in the Heart Institute’s telehome monitoring program include:

- Arnprior & District Memorial Hospital
- Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital
- Cornwall Community Hospital
- Deep River & District Hospital
- Hawkesbury & District General Hospital
- Montfort Hospital
- Pembroke Regional Hospital
- Queensway Carleton Hospital
- Renfrew Victoria Hospital
- St. Francis Memorial Hospital, Barry’s Bay
- The Ottawa Hospital
- Winchester District Memorial Hospital
- Perth & Smiths Falls District Hospital

About UOHI

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute is Canada’s largest and foremost cardiovascular health centre dedicated to understanding, treating and preventing heart disease. We deliver high-tech care with a personal touch, shape the way cardiovascular medicine is practiced, and revolutionize cardiac treatment and understanding. We build knowledge through research and translate discoveries into advanced care. We serve the local, national and international community, and are pioneering a new era in heart health. For more information, visit www.ottawaheart.ca

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