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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### National report confirms BC leadership in kidney care

*Vancouver, BC* – The findings of a new national report about the treatment of patients with end-stage organ failure shows that British Columbians with kidney disease benefit from the most integrated and effective system of renal care in the country.

The report, issued today by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), examines the quality of treatment for patients with end-stage organ disease across the country. Kidney disease is the most prevalent of end-stage organ diseases, affecting more than 33,000 Canadians who must undergo regular dialysis or receive a kidney transplant to live.

Among other things, the CIHI report reveals that BC is below the Canadian average for the number of hemodialysis (HD) stations per million of population. This finding reflects the success of efforts by the BC renal network, led by the BC Provincial Renal Agency (BCPRA), to develop an integrated strategy for the early identification of kidney disease and appropriate follow-up intervention.

“The success of the BC Renal Agency means better health outcomes for British Columbians,” said B.C. Health Services Minister George Abbott. “One of these outcomes is a lower growth rate in the need for kidney dialysis, which can be attributed to the fact that patients are diagnosed at an earlier stage and treated sooner.”

“Ten years ago, the number of patients in B.C. who required dialysis was growing by 16 percent every year,” says BCPRA executive director, Dr. Adeera Levin. “Through our early identification and intervention strategy we’ve managed to significantly reduce that growth rate and improve outcomes for renal patients throughout the province.”

B.C. now has the lowest growth rate for kidney dialysis in the country, at three per cent per year. In the last year alone, the reduction in the dialysis growth rate has saved the provincial health care system \$3.2 million, which can be invested in other areas to improve patient care.

A key benefit of early detection and treatment of kidney disease for patients is that they have a better chance of slowing the progression of their condition, which means their need for dialysis or a kidney transplant can be delayed or even avoided altogether.

Early intervention also provides time for care teams to help patients plan for transplantation, including from living donors, and to promote independent dialysis options, which have proven health and lifestyle benefits in comparison with conventional hemodialysis. Independent dialysis, including peritoneal dialysis and home hemodialysis, enables patients to do their own dialysis without needing to go to dialysis clinics.

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B.C. has the highest percentage of independent dialysis patients in the country. With 30 per cent of its dialysis patients on independent dialysis, and with its success at delaying or avoiding dialysis for patients with early stage kidney disease, B.C. does not have the same need as other provinces for maintaining a relatively high number of conventional, clinic-based dialysis stations to ensure the highest quality of care for its renal patients.

Since 2001, the number of patients on all forms of dialysis in B.C. has increased by 42 per cent to 2,558. Over the same period, the total number of patients receiving treatment for kidney disease in the province has grown from 3,496 to 10,549.

The BC renal network's early identification and intervention strategy, launched in 2003, was the first of its kind in North America. Through this initiative, British Columbians with chronic kidney disease are now being diagnosed 15 per cent earlier than in the past.

In B.C., regional health authorities are responsible for dialysis care to patients. The B.C. Provincial Renal Agency plans and co-ordinates kidney care throughout the province for those affected by kidney disease.

British Columbians can learn more about kidney disease and renal care through HealthLink BC at [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or by calling the HealthLink BC at 811.



**BC Renal  
Agency**

An agency of the Provincial  
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## Backgrounder

In addition to having the lowest growth rate for dialysis in Canada, BC has:

- A significantly higher percentage of patients (30%) on independent dialysis (25% on peritoneal dialysis and 4.8% on home hemodialysis) than any other province, as shown on page 13 of the CIHI report. In the other provinces the percentage of patients on independent dialysis varies from 15.6% to 22.4%.
- The lowest percentage of hemodialysis (HD) patients among incident patients (i.e. the highest percentage of patients starting peritoneal dialysis, or PD), as shown on page eight of the CIHI report.

The BCPRA's early identification and intervention strategy includes:

- A successful province-wide lab program (the first of its kind in North America) that standardized measurement and reporting of kidney function to family physicians and other care providers
- Development of pre-dialysis or chronic kidney disease (CKD) clinical practice guidelines and general practitioner education programs
- Funding of CKD clinics across health authority renal programs, to enable patients in the early stages of the disease process to receive care and advice from a team of specialized health professionals, including a nephrologist, nurse, dietitian, pharmacist and social worker.

As a result of the BCPRA's early identification and intervention strategy, the average level of kidney function for British Columbians diagnosed with kidney disease today is 15 percent higher than it was in 2003. Through treatment and education these patients have a better chance of slowing the disease's progression, which means the need for dialysis or a kidney transplant can be delayed or even avoided.

Led by the BCPRA, the BC renal network also actively promotes the uptake of independent dialysis modalities – including home hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis, for patients who require dialysis. These independent dialysis options enable patients to dialyse in their homes, without the need for using the facilities of a dialysis clinic. BC has the highest percentage of patients on independent dialysis in the country.

Renal patients on independent dialysis have better clinical outcomes than patients who must regularly visit a dialysis clinic for their treatment.