

## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### Yukon trapper manages dialysis at home – 2,000 kilometres from his kidney care team

*Vancouver, BC* – Last July, Gerry Couture, a seventy-year-old trapper and pilot from the Yukon, became seriously ill while on a fishing trip with his family. At hospital in Whitehorse, the local doctor discovered Couture had a serious kidney problem and put him on a plane to Vancouver to be seen by a kidney specialist.

In Vancouver it was found that Couture’s kidney failure was caused by an extremely rare condition known as Goodpasture’s syndrome and he was immediately put onto hemodialysis. As there are no hemodialysis clinics in the Yukon, he spent the next four months receiving hemodialysis treatment in Vancouver, wondering whether he would ever return to his home in the north.

His chance to return came through an innovative home hemodialysis program offered through the BC Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The program provides the training and equipment required for people with end stage kidney disease to do their own dialysis at home. The agency’s home hemodialysis program is the largest of its kind in Canada and currently supports 145 people on home hemodialysis across BC.

Today, Couture is the only Yukoner, and the most remote participant in the BC Renal Agency’s home hemodialysis program. He spends six nights every week hooked up to a hemodialysis machine that filters his blood while he sleeps. With 2,000 kilometres between Couture in his Dawson City home and his kidney care team in Vancouver, there is little room for error. For that reason, he has two hemodialysis machines, to ensure one is always available as a back-up.

“I can’t imagine Gerry living anywhere but in the Yukon, and it was very satisfying to provide him with a treatment option that allows him to stay there and in fact to thrive,” says nephrologist Dr. Mike Copland, provincial medical director of the BC Renal Agency’s home hemodialysis program. “Studies show that patients on home hemodialysis have better health outcomes than patients who visit clinics for their hemodialysis, so in many ways he’s getting the best treatment possible.”

“I can’t say enough about the BC Renal Agency and the quality of care I’ve received from everyone involved,” says Couture. “With home hemodialysis, I’m able to live a relatively normal life and take care of my own treatment, which is the best possible scenario for me.”

March is National Kidney Month. The BC Provincial Renal Agency encourages British Columbians to learn more about their risk for developing kidney disease and offers a simple online quiz on its website, at [www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca).

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## **Backgrounder**

### ***Are Your Kidneys OK?***

Test your knowledge of kidney disease by filling out the quiz posted throughout Kidney Month at [www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca). At the end of March, random draws will be made and prizes awarded.

### ***What are some of the symptoms to look for?***

In the early stages of kidney disease, many individuals experience no symptoms. However, common early symptoms of kidney disease include: foamy or bloody urine; a frequent need to urinate at night; headaches; and puffy eyes or ankles.

### ***Why is there a Kidney Month?***

While patients with kidney disease in British Columbia have some of the best outcomes in the country and a broad range of care options, early diagnosis and treatment are essential to achieve the best patient outcomes, as changes to diet or medication can slow or even stop the progress of kidney disease.

### ***During the March Drive...***

More than 8,000 Kidney Foundation volunteers will canvass homes across BC to raise awareness and funds for research and patient programs.

### ***Where can I find out more about World Kidney Day?***

[www.worldkidneyday.org](http://www.worldkidneyday.org)

### ***Where can I learn more about kidney disease?***

[www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)  
[www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)

The BC Renal Agency ([www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)) and the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch ([www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)) are good sources of information for patients and their families. The BC Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, has an informative DVD (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi and Tagalog versions) featuring patients who tell their stories about living and dealing positively with kidney disease. The DVD can be ordered through the agency's online order form. It can also be viewed online (English only).