



**BC Renal  
Agency**  
An agency of the Provincial  
Health Services Authority



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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### 25,000<sup>th</sup> visit to kidney clinic celebrated Clinic model has helped decrease dialysis growth in BC

*Vancouver, BC* – Jim Dunsmore believes he would be on dialysis today were it not for the Kidney Function Clinic at St. Paul’s Hospital, part of Providence Health Care (PHC). The Vancouver architect, whose health challenges include kidney disease, type 1 diabetes and heart disease, has attended the clinic since 1997. His appointment on Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup> will mark the 25,000<sup>th</sup> patient visit to the clinic, which has served as a model for early kidney care intervention across the province.

“The clinic has changed my life in an extremely positive way,” says Dunsmore. “I know for certain that without the support and guidance I’ve received from the kidney specialists, nurses, dietitians and social workers, I wouldn’t have been able to maintain my health to the degree that I have.”

“The success of the BC Renal Agency, Providence Health Care and the health authority renal programs means better health outcomes for British Columbians such as Jim Dunsmore,” says Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “In fact, the findings of a Canadian Institute for Health Information report shows that British Columbians with kidney disease benefit from the most integrated and effective system of renal care in the country.”

In 2001, the BC Provincial Renal Agency (BCPRA) began funding kidney care clinics, and today there are 12 across the province that collectively treat over 6,500 patients per year. The positive health outcomes are clear: patients feel more independent, experience a better quality of life and have a much better chance of slowing progression of their condition, which means the need for lifesaving dialysis or a kidney transplant can be delayed or even avoided.

“Kidney disease is a 24/7 condition that requires patients to make frequent decisions about medication, pain, fatigue, diet and exercise,” says Lee Clark, PHC’s Renal Program Director. “But back in the mid ‘90s when the St. Paul’s clinic opened, support for patients in the early stages of kidney disease was quite limited.”

“In addition to kidney care clinics, in recent years, the province has put into place strategies to support family physicians in diagnosing and treating patients with kidney disease,” says Dr. Adeera Levin, a nephrologist at the clinic and Executive Director of BCPRA. “As a result, we are now diagnosing people at earlier stages of kidney disease, allowing more time for treatment aimed at reducing or even stopping progression.”

The combined early identification and intervention strategies appear to be making a significant difference in the growth rate for kidney dialysis in BC, which has dropped from a high of about 16 percent in the late ‘90s to 3 percent per year – the lowest growth rate in the country.

The benefits include significant financial savings – in the last year alone, the reduction in the dialysis growth rate saved the provincial health care system \$2.5 million, which was invested in other areas to improve patient care.

“The success of the BC Renal Agency, Providence Health Care and the health authority renal programs means better health outcomes for British Columbians,” said B.C. Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “In fact, the findings of a Canadian Institute for Health Care Improvement report issued late last year 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.”

Kidney disease is a silent, incurable chronic illness closely tied to diabetes and heart disease. In BC, regional health authorities are responsible for dialysis care to patients. The BC 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.



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## Backgrounder

The BCPRA's early identification and intervention strategy includes:

- A successful province-wide lab program (the first of its kind in North America) that standardizes 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 (including Providence Health Care), to enable patients in the early stages of kidney disease to receive care and advice from a team of specialized health professionals, including a nephrologist, nurse, dietitian, pharmacist and social worker. Since 2001, funding for these clinics has increased by almost \$4 million, and the number of patients seen at these clinics has grown four-fold.

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.

### **About Providence Health Care**

Providence Health Care is one of Canada's largest faith-based health care organizations, operating 14 health care facilities in Greater Vancouver. Guided by the principle "How you want to be treated," PHC's 1,000 physicians and 6,000 staff deliver compassionate care to patients and residents in British Columbia. Providence's programs and services span the complete continuum of care and serve people throughout B.C. As a renowned academic health science leader, PHC operates one of two teaching hospitals in the province, performs cutting-edge research in more than 30 clinical specialties, and focuses its services on six "populations of emphasis": cardio-pulmonary risks and illnesses, HIV/AIDS, mental health, renal risks and illness, specialized needs in aging and urban health.

**Note to editors/reporters - the following are available upon request:**

- A backgrounder on the Providence Health Care renal program
- Interviews with the 25,000<sup>th</sup> patient, Jim Dunsmore, at the Kidney Function Clinic
- Interviews with Dr. Adeera Levin, Executive Director of the BC Provincial Renal Agency (BCPRA)
- Interviews with Dr. Monica Beaulieu, a nephrologist at the clinic
- The CIHI 2008 annual report titled “The Treatment of End-Stage Organ Failure in Canada”
- December 18<sup>th</sup> news release announcing the findings of the Canadian Institute for Health Information’s report that shows BC leads Canada when it comes to kidney care
- Professional photographs of the patient’s 25,000<sup>th</sup> visit