

A happy return to renal

Interior Health's new executive sponsor for renal, Joanne Konnert, is no stranger to this area of care. Before joining IH four years ago, Joanne spent several years in the same role with Fraser Health, where she was a chief operating officer. However, she says her return to renal has provided a pleasant surprise.



"I can't believe how much progress has been made in renal care since I've been away," says Joanne. "It's very impressive!"

She attributes the progress to the BC renal network's best practice culture and to the support and commitment of key physicians and other leaders around the province.

"I think the provincial organizational structure for renal is excellent, and provides a model for other areas of care in BC and across the country," says Joanne.

In addition to her executive sponsorship role, Joanne is also vice president of tertiary services for IH. This means, with the recent restructuring of renal care at IH into a single program, she also has management responsibility for renal care throughout the health authority.

Joanne expects the new structure will provide opportunities for improving patient care in the many rural areas of the sprawling health authority. For example, she expects to see increased use of telehealth technology to help bring care closer to home for patients.

Joanne started her career in health care "many years ago" as a mental health nurse at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster. She moved into administration in the 1980s when she became director of nursing at the hospital. In fact, her history with renal dates back to her time at Royal Columbian, prior to the BC Provincial Renal Agency, when the hospital managed a large renal program.

Although she admits to being a big-city person and that moving to the Okanagan was a major transition for her – "I didn't know what to expect," – Joanne is happily settled in Kelowna with her husband.

"This is god's country," she says. "The golfing is great, I've got good neighbours and I am very pleased with the move."