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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FIRST CARDIAC PROCEDURE PERFORMED IN KELOWNA**

KELOWNA – The first-ever cardiac procedure to be performed at Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) was successfully completed earlier this week, marking the first time a percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) has been done anywhere in the province outside of the Lower Mainland and Victoria.

Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon, Kelowna-Mission MLA Steve Thomson and Kelowna-Lake Country MLA Norm Letnick were joined by Dr. Richard Townley, the interventional cardiologist who performed the procedure, Ron Kaerne, the patient who underwent one of the first PCIs – also known as angioplasties – and Interior Health representatives to celebrate the milestone.

“This is a milestone in cardiac care for the Interior,” said Falcon. “With the launch of cardiac intervention procedures at KGH, cardiac patients throughout the Interior are now able to get care closer to home, without having to travel to the Lower Mainland.”

PCIs were previously only performed at four hospitals in British Columbia: Royal Columbian Hospital, Royal Jubilee Hospital, St. Paul’s Hospital and Vancouver General Hospital.

“Up until now we have only been able to diagnose a cardiac problem, and would then have to send our patients for care to other areas of the province” said Dr. Townley, who is also the Interior Health Regional Cardiac Angioplasty program director. “Now, we are able to care for those patients here, making things easier on them and their families.”

A PCI is a procedure in which a narrowed section of the coronary artery is widened to increase blood flow to the heart. A PCI is less invasive and has a shorter recovery time than bypass surgery. A PCI is done using a thin, soft tube called a catheter. A doctor inserts the catheter into a blood vessel and guides the catheter through blood vessels until it reaches the blocked portion of the coronary artery.

A small, expandable wire tube called a stent is often permanently inserted into the artery during the procedure. A balloon is placed inside the stent and inflated, which opens the stent and pushes it into place against the artery wall. The balloon is then deflated and removed, leaving the stent in place. Because the stent is mesh-like, the cells lining the blood vessel grow through and around the stent to help secure it.

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“It was very reassuring to know that I was going to be able to get my procedure done in Kelowna,” said Ron Kaerne, the first patient to undergo the procedure. “The cardiology team at KGH provided me with great care. I was up and walking around the next day.”

PCI and heart surgery services are being rolled out at KGH in a phased approach. To get to this first phase – performing PCIs – minor renovations and upgrades were done to the existing facilities. The next step will see doctors performing heart surgeries at KGH, beginning in 2012. The final stage is still in the planning phase, but will include a brand new cardiac care and surgical centre, including improvements to inpatient surgical services, a new and expanded central sterile supply department and new cardiac critical care beds.

“I have lived in Kelowna for most of my life, and have seen our city – and the entire Southern Interior region – grow exponentially in that time,” said MLA Thomson. “Bringing cardiac services to Kelowna will help the almost 1,600 patients per year who previously had to travel for their care.”

“The cardiac program here at KGH will have a direct, positive impact on patients and their friends and family,” said MLA Letnick. “It will allow cardiac patients to have their support networks around them while they prepare for and recover from their procedures, helping them get better, faster.”

The cardiac program at KGH will operate in collaboration with the other cardiac centres in the province. Tertiary cardiac services are planned, co-ordinated, monitored, evaluated and funded by Cardiac Services BC, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. It works with the regional health authorities, including Interior Health, to promote best practices and evidence-based cardiac care.

“The outcomes for patients who have a heart attack is greatly improved when they have timely access to highly specialized services including interventional cardiac procedures like PCI,” said David Babiuk, provincial executive director, Cardiac Services BC. “Interior Health has brought together an experienced group of health professionals for their cardiac program and has the full support of the established cardiac programs in Victoria and the Lower Mainland to achieve the highest level of success.”

“By expanding our services to include tertiary cardiac procedures and care, we are improving the overall health care services we are able to offer everyone in the Interior,” said Norman Embree, Interior Health board chair. “Along with the expansions currently underway at KGH and Vernon Jubilee Hospital, we are building patient care here in the Interior.”

Kelowna General Hospital and Vernon Jubilee Hospital are currently benefiting from a \$432.9-million expansion. The expansion will feature a new, larger emergency department at KGH, a new medical school building to house the Southern Medical Program, and new patient care towers at both KGH and VJH. The Kelowna and Vernon Hospitals Project is part of government’s \$2.9-billion investment in health capital projects across the province.

In British Columbia, the wait time for cardiac surgery has dropped more than 50 per cent to under seven weeks in 2008-09 from 15.1 weeks in 2001. The number of open heart surgeries increased by approximately 10 per cent to 3,340 and angioplasties increased by approximately 58 per cent to 7,001 in 2008-09 compared to 2001.

-30-

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