



Tele-Thoracic Surgeon Consultation @ Interior Health

CST Telehealth 2004
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Introduction

- Interior Health (Kelowna) is one of four centres of excellence for thoracic surgery in BC.
- Prior to telehealth, surgeons traveled on a monthly basis to rural sites or patients traveled to them.
- We implemented a “virtual clinic” at 4 main regional centres within Interior Health.

In Jan 2003, thoracic services were consolidated in the Province of BC. There are 4 centres of excellence for thoracic surgery, one of them in Interior Health

Prior to the implementation of the Tele-thoracic consultation, each month, a thoracic surgeon would travel to Cranbrook, Kamloops and Trail for a one day clinic where they see patients.

If the patient was not seen at the clinic, they would have to travel to Kelowna for their initial assessments, surgery if required and post operative follow ups.

An appointment can require several days of travel, accommodation, childcare; meal expenses and leaves patients exhausted for days and weeks afterwards.

The travel for the surgeons is takes considerable time and energy and often creates further delays for patients trying to access the specialists at the Kelowna site.

Each Health Service Area regional site (Cranbrook, Trail, Kamloops and Kelowna) was equipped with a “virtual clinic” consultation room with videoconferencing capabilities to conduct thoracic surgery initial assessments and post operative follow ups as appropriate.

How it Works



Each Thoracic Surgery Telehealth Clinic site is supported by a Registered Nurse. Patients are scheduled directly by the physician office and they are registered as outpatients for Telehealth clinic at the hospital.

Referral documents are sent to the physician office if they are not available electronically.

Results

- Over three hundred patients have used the service in 9 months.
- *"It was wonderful not having to travel to Kelowna for this. The whole experience was very positive"*
- *"In the room I had a nurse right with me. Overall the experience was excellent"*

Conclusions and Next Steps

- It is not about convenience, it is about better patient care. Quicker diagnosis, less stress and better health outcomes.
- We have the ability to do urgent or emergency consults remotely.
- It provides access to service that was previously only available by traveling.
- Future plans include adding more virtual clinic points.

Using the videoconferencing facilities means that both the physicians and the patients get to stay in their home community. That leads to quicker diagnoses, less stress for the patient and their family, and better health outcomes.

Interior Health is continuing its investment in Telehealth and other technology projects for the benefit of patients. It gets the information where it needs to go - faster. Telehealth can remove geographical restrictions and connect patients, physicians, nurses, and other health care providers to one another for improved efficiency, access, training, and service.