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Alberta-made solution to benefit Nunavut *Innovative telehealth scheduling brings care closer to home*

IQALUIT, Nunavut, August 30, 2004 -- Nunavut has launched an Alberta-made system that will help the territory deliver quality health care to communities through innovative use of video-conferencing.

The Telehealth Program Coordination and Scheduling system coordinates the telehealth sessions of 17 separate sites in Nunavut as well as being able to organize sessions with physicians from throughout western Canada. Telehealth is a two-way video link that allows patients to reach physicians and specialists in other centres. It provides full interaction with the physician, enabling them to supply medical advice or treatment plans.

“The Ikajuruti Inungnik Ungasiktumi Telehealth Network has played a very important role in bringing care closer to home for Nunavummiut,” Nunavut Health and Social Services Minister Levinia Brown said. “Our partnership with Alberta in this project is an example of working together for the health of Canadians.”

The Telehealth Program Coordination and Scheduling system gives participating provinces, territories, health authorities and others access to a web-based system to plan telehealth sessions. The system makes it easier for Nunavut patients to benefit from a large pool of medical expertise from across western Canada. Nunavut joins Alberta, Saskatchewan and Health Canada’s First Nations and Inuit Health branch as partners in the program.

“This telehealth system is a made-in-Alberta technology solution that is helping improve access to health care services,” said Gary Mar, Alberta’s Minister of Health and Wellness. “I’m pleased that Nunavut patients will now be able to share in this success story.”

The Alberta system was adapted to meet Nunavut’s unique needs. Services able to be delivered by telehealth include psychiatric counselling, pediatrics, physiotherapy, clinical discharge planning, case conferencing and even family visitation. The scheduling system has been in operation since 2001 and has supported over 20,000 telehealth sessions.

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