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**November 28, 2024**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Minimally invasive intervention program set to revolutionize open-heart surgery in Alberta**

*The establishment of an internationally acclaimed heart valve center of excellence marks a new first for Calgary healthcare and will offer state-of-the-art surgical procedures to dramatically improve patient outcomes.*

CALGARY, AB – **Calgary Health Foundation announces a commitment of \$3.52M toward the establishment of an innovative heart valve intervention program.** The Mitral Valve Interventions Program, made possible through the ongoing support of Calgary Health Foundation donors, Alberta Health Services, and a multidisciplinary group of pioneering cardiac specialists, is set to bring a revolutionary heart surgery procedure and program to Calgary.

Edge-to-edge repair (TEER) surgery is a minimally invasive procedure for high-risk heart valve disease patients, or those experiencing issues with one of the four valves, or doors, of the heart. TEER involves MitraClip™, a novel procedure used to fix a malfunctioning mitral valve, the door that controls blood flow between the heart's left chambers.

Available in Canada since 2014, MitraClip does not require open-heart surgery or temporarily stopping the heart. Instead, it involves a technique using a catheter, or a tiny tube, to access and fix the valve. MitraClip has been shown to drastically reduce the chance of heart failure and complications, lowers hospital stays post-surgery—a couple of days instead of a few weeks—and improves overall quality of life.

Until recently, TEER was not available in Alberta. People wanting the less-invasive option had to travel to Vancouver or Saskatoon to get it. Thankfully, a group of cardiac specialists has brought TEER and MitraClip to Calgary. A disease-specific mitral valve clinic was created with a team of six healthcare professionals from multiple disciplines to assess and treat patients. The team has successfully performed six procedures since November 2023.

Once fully funded, the Mitral Valve Interventions Program would build on this success and increase the availability of TEER to more people. The program aims to lead the world in minimally invasive cardiac surgery, provide the best clinical care for Calgarians, and get patients back to living their best lives months earlier.

“Adding transcatheter MitraClip to our complement of treatment options allows us to offer an even less invasive surgery option and results in significant benefits for patients and the healthcare system,” says cardiac surgeon Dr. Corey Adams.

The opportunity to champion a program offering dramatic advances in heart health and surgical care, two of Calgary Health Foundation's highest priorities, made the decision to support the project easy.

“We are proud to champion the Mitral Valve Interventions Program, an initiative made possible only through donors in the community. Our supporters repeatedly tell us they value initiatives that improve the

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quality of life of patients; this pioneering program answers this hope. While it is well underway, this project relies on donor support. We are asking the community to continue to donate to ensure we reach the \$3.52M fundraising goal. With the support of donors, we are confident we will be able to offer more firsts for cardiac patients." Murray Sigler, President & CEO, Calgary Health Foundation.

Helen Paterson, 82, underwent TEER on November 6, 2023, at Foothills Medical Centre. She was one of two patients to first undergo MitraClip in Calgary. Her goal had been to be up and on her feet in time to bake Christmas cookies with her grandkids. Thanks to her surgeon, Dr. William Kent, and the entire program team, she was able to see her wish come true.

"My life has improved 100% compared to what it was before I met Dr. Kent. I felt better within two days of having (my November 2023) surgery and have had to remind myself to take it easy since I did so well afterwards. "

Dr. Kent leads the Mitral Valve Interventions Program from the surgical side with Dr. Adams, along with Drs. Michael Curtis and Nishant Sharma, two Calgary interventional cardiologists.

"As a heart surgeon, witnessing Helen's remarkable recovery is gratifying. As our first MitraClip patient at FMC, the minimal recovery associated with this innovative procedure is impressive relative to open heart surgery. It is incredible to see a patient return to her daily activities, like shopping, just two days after her procedure. This not only highlights the effectiveness of the MitraClip but also reinforces our commitment to providing less invasive options that enhance the quality of life for our patients." Dr. Kent.

According to Dr. Michael Curtis, interventional cardiologist and head of Foothills Medical Centre's catheterization lab, the collaborative aspect of the program will be a critical aspect of its success.

"In the operating room, interventional cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, anesthesiologists, imaging cardiologists, and nurses work together to successfully deploy MitraClip. Preoperatively, an assessment team, led by clinical nurse specialists, collaborate in a valve-focused clinic created to promote tailored treatment so the right procedure is chosen for the right patient. This gives our patients the best result with the least amount of risk, and the greatest potential for long-term benefit."

An estimated 10 per cent of people over 65 have significant mitral valve regurgitation (MVR), a leak from the valve and the main reason to undergo TEER surgery. MVR is an inherited progressive issue that leads to shortness of breath, high blood pressure, leg swelling, and fatigue. When MVR escalates to decompensated heart failure, fluid fills the lungs and patients feel like they are drowning.

Almost 2,000 patients undergo cardiac surgery in the Calgary Zone each year – many of which are minimally-invasive, including mitral valve, aortic valve, tricuspid valve and coronary bypass procedures.

The program team plans to do 30 procedures for the first three years, a number that is expected to increase. Foothills Medical Centre is currently the only hospital offer TEER surgery in Alberta, a first for the province.

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## **FAST FACTS**

### **About Calgary Health Foundation**

*Calgary Health Foundation is a community-based charity raising funds to advance healthcare across our city. We find opportunities to invest in excellence across the entire healthcare system and offer more firsts for care providers and patients, all to enhance outcomes and improve lives. [calgaryhealthfoundation.ca](http://calgaryhealthfoundation.ca)*

### **About Alberta Health Services**

*Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Our mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. Our current focus is on decreasing emergency department wait times, improving EMS response times, reducing wait times for surgeries, and improving patient flow.*

### **Traditional open-heart surgery versus edge-to-edge repair (TEER) surgery**

*TEER is a simple procedure used to fix a faulty mitral valve, one of the four valves, or doors, of the heart that controls blood flow between its chambers. During the procedure, a specialized catheter-based device, or clip, the size of a dime is implanted into the heart and attached to the valve. The clip helps the valve close completely and restores normal blood flow.*

*The clip is inserted into the heart via the femoral vein, eliminating the need for a chest incision. Unlike open-heart surgery, the small groin incision is closed with a single stitch and most patients are discharged home the day after their procedure.*

### **About MitraClip™**

*The MitraClip procedure has become the gold standard for the treatment of high-risk mitral valve disease patients, or those whose mitral valve does not fully close resulting in blood flow regurgitating, or flowing backward, across the valve. During the minimally invasive operation, a small clip is implanted into the heart and attached to the mitral valve to help it close and return normal blood flow to the body. Since 2003, more than 150,000 patients worldwide have been successfully treated with the MitraClip system. MitraClip is an innovation of Abbott, a company with a more than 130-year history of creating breakthrough care products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutrition, and branded generic pharmaceuticals. [mitraclip.com](http://mitraclip.com)*

### **Heart disease in Canada**

*Every 20 minutes someone in Canada dies from a cardiac issue. This is the harsh reality of cardiovascular disease, the number one global killer for both men and women, and the second leading cause of death in Canada. In Canada, 9 in 10 people over the age of 20 have at least one risk factor for heart conditions, stroke, or vascular cognitive impairment. Early intervention is crucial to reducing the likelihood of vulnerable individuals needing future invasive and high-risk surgery.*

### **For more information, contact:**

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