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New Website Supports Patients Born with Heart Disease



The Peter Munk Cardiac Centre in Toronto has spearheaded the creation of a new website that aims to support young people with congenital heart disease. The website, iheartchange.org, enables patients, their family members and healthcare providers to log in and get information through videos, images and downloads.

Survival rates of infants with congenital heart disease have climbed to as much as 90 percent in recent decades, making it one of modern medicine's greatest success stories. However, according to experts, the surveillance of these patients in an adult-care setting remains inconsistent. This observation served as the catalyst for creating the new website.

"Many congenital heart disease patients have lapses in care particularly once they enter adulthood," said Dr. Adrienne Kovacs, Clinical Psychologist, Peter Munk Cardiac Centre, who oversaw the website initiative. "Research shows that they are more likely to require a new diagnosis, or need urgent testing to make sure they are on the right medication or have the correct procedures."

Through the new website, Dr. Kovacs noted, these adult patients can access information that will guide them to ensure they receive optimal care while maintaining regular medical visits. From information about transferring from paediatric to adult care, to coping skills and medical facts, the website also offers these patients the ability to learn about members of their Adult Congenital Heart Disease care team.

"As a leading international centre for adult congenital heart disease, we are excited to be able to advance our leadership by providing ongoing excellence in care for these patients through this innovative project," said Dr. Barry Rubin, Medical Director of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre. "This initiative is also a testament to the foresight and vision of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Innovation Committee whose decision to fund this project expedited its development and completion."

Based on data collected from a pilot study and created in collaboration with healthcare providers and funding from the Labatt Family Heart Centre at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), iheartchange.org also includes information about Adult Congenital Heart Disease programmes at hospitals in Calgary, Vancouver, Michigan, and Cincinnati.

"Some adolescents and young adults with congenital heart disease and their families will struggle with the transition to adult care," explained Dr. Kovacs, who is also an Adjunct Scientist at SickKids.

"They have had the same hospital, the same medical providers for 18 years. It will take a while to develop new relationships with their providers in the adult setting so by introducing that team ahead of time through the

website, along with other important information, we think we can make that transition a little easier," the doctor added.

The Peter Munk Cardiac Centre is the premier cardiac centre in Canada. Since its opening in 1997, the Centre has saved and improved the lives of cardiac and vascular patients from around the world. Each year, approximately 55,000 patients receive innovative and compassionate care from multidisciplinary teams in the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre.

In addition, the Centre trains more cardiologists, cardiovascular surgeons and vascular surgeons than any other hospital in Canada. The Centre is based at Toronto General Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital - members of the University Health Network.

Source: Newswise

Image Credit: Toronto Congenital Cardiac Centre for Adults, Peter Munk Cardiac Centre

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