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St. Mary's Hospital Center
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Caring through excellence



Telehealth : a tool for the future being developed at St Mary's

The innovative work of Dr Arnaert in tele-oncology is drawing attention amongst experts in the treatment of cancer across the country

Montreal, January 25th, 2010 – The high-tech research in telehealth of Dr Antonia Arnaert, from McGill University and St. Mary's Hospital Centre (SMHC), was selected from among numerous submissions to be presented during the first national symposium entitled "Optimizing the Cancer Workforce" organized by the Canadian Partnership against Cancer. This national event brings together a very diversified panel of stakeholders involved in optimizing the delivery of care in oncology through the exchanging of ideas and information and debating on the most innovative and forward-thinking projects in this field.

In fact, Dr Arnaert and her team assess the efficacy of post-hospital follow-up through video-conference, by installing the appropriate device and a high-speed internet connection in the patients' homes. At the hospital a specially-trained nurse connected to the same system answers the patient's questions and monitors the remote follow-up. As a consequence, patients are taken care of in real time, in their own homes, without having to come back to the hospital.

"Every member of our team feels very honored and proud about this selection," exclaims Dr Arnaert. "It proves that our work has a meaningful impact, both on the quality of life of our patients and on relieving the burden of overcrowding from very busy hospital departments. By making remote communication between the patient and the therapeutic team not just possible, but a practical reality, we are creating a new model of care for cancer patients: a model that would be integrated in to the health care sector while also being physically at the core of the community."

SMHC nurses who enthusiastically got onboard this project from the very beginning were rewarded by the reports of high levels of satisfaction from their patients for this new model. "The concerns and problems of the patients are taken care of immediately in the comfort of their own homes, helping them to avoid a crisis situation and thereby saving them the long trip to the ER. This outcome proves very beneficial not just for the patients, but also for the emergency units that are then less crowded," explains Dr Arnaert.

Dr Antonia Arnaert is an Associate Professor at McGill School of Nursing and an Associate Member with the Department of Clinical epidemiology and Community Studies at SMHC.

St. Mary's Hospital Center (SMHC) is a university affiliated, community hospital which serves a multicultural population. It seeks to provide the highest level of safe patient and family focused care. St. Mary's is an integral part of the Réseau universitaire intégré de santé (RUIS) McGill.

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