

## Canadian telehealth collaboration to share health expertise with the Middle East

News release— 2005

**Toronto, ONT** -- Canadian healthcare and academic leaders have signed on to a formal telehealth initiative to exchange medical knowledge with their colleagues in the Middle East . It is hoped the initiative will strengthen bonds among Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians over a common cause – improving health status and health care services for their populations.

The **International Network of Knowledge through Electronic Learning** was created on Oct. 24 with the signing of an agreement between Baycrest, the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO), the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto , and the Peter A. Silverman Centre for International Health at Mount Sinai Hospital.

The Canadian group has been involved, through CISEPO and the University of Toronto , in cooperative cross-border continuing medical education programming for the last decade. In 2002, live video teleconferencing was introduced on a demonstration basis with telehealth distance educational programming. Most recently, the Peter A. Silverman Global eHealth program pioneered, and Baycrest hosted, a historic international medical rounds with CISEPO's Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian academic partners, South Africa and the World Health Organization.

Oct. 24th marks the Canadian group's formal collaboration and commitment to officially launch an eHealth learning program and evaluation component, with the Middle East . The Middle Eastern partners include: Edith Wolfson Medical Center, Tel Aviv University, Holon, Israel; Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid; and Al Quds University, West Bank.

"We now have a remarkable distance learning program at hand that will enable our Arab and Israeli student, faculty and institutional network to share knowledge together under a Canadian umbrella and build trust and confidence in the health sector and beyond for the future of the region," says Dr. Arnold Noyek, Director of the Peter A. Silverman Centre for International Health at Mount Sinai Hospital and chair of CISEPO.

Under the three-year agreement, supported by a \$1-million donation from benefactor Peter A. Silverman, each member of the Canadian group will contribute specific expertise to the network, which is essentially an education and distance learning system through the Peter A. Silverman Global eHealth Program.

"Baycrest is honoured and excited to be part of this historic telehealth network that will encourage relationship-building and professional development on both sides of the world," says Stephen W. Herbert, President and CEO of Baycrest.

Telehealth rounds will be delivered in real time in Canada and the Middle East on topics that include the diagnoses and current treatments of some of the most devastating neurological and psychiatric conditions to afflict aging adults, such as Alzheimer's Disease, depression, Parkinson's, or a combination of neurologically complex conditions. Healthcare and community health professionals, residents and students will view the same patient cases and then engage in discussion, exchanging ideas and expert opinion.

Baycrest's on-site telehealth facility, which is being upgraded and expanded as a result of the new partnership, will be the central hub of program delivery.

"What better way to exploit global capability than for the purpose of healthcare and, in the process, build bridges in the Middle East ," says Joe Mapa, President and CEO of Mount Sinai Hospital.

"This eHealth initiative is truly innovative – building international cooperation while addressing local needs in the Middle East through professional education. It shines light on a positive way forward in a conflicted region for achieving global health," adds Dr. Harvey Skinner , Chair of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto .

If this model of global eHealth learning proves successful with the Middle East , the network plans to expand it to other countries and regions of the world with adaptations considering local culture, politics and language.

"This program fulfills a long held dream of mine to help form an initiative that is truly global and has such groundbreaking potential." says Peter A. Silverman Q.C.



Officially signing the telehealth agreement are, left to right: Joe Mapa, President and CEO of Mount Sinai Hospital; Dr. Harvey Skinner, Chair of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto; Dr. Arnold Noyek, Director of the Peter A. Silverman Centre for International Health at Mount Sinai Hospital and Chair of the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO); Stephen W. Herbert, President and CEO of Baycrest; and benefactor Peter A. Silverman Q.C., who supported the three-year telehealth initiative with the Middle East with a \$1-million donation.

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What each Canadian member brings to the collaboration:

**Baycrest** will contribute its expertise in geriatric and gerontological care, brain health functioning and mental health, as well as its on-site telehealth facility to deliver and coordinate the international distance learning. Baycrest has developed international partnerships including and beyond the health sector.

**CISEPO** brings a strong, internationally-known network in global medical and health education, having developed important relationships with academic, government, hospitals and community organizations in Canada and the Middle East .

**Mount Sinai Hospital (MSH)** is a leader in providing education in areas such as Women's and Infant's Health, Pathology, Oncology, and Internal Medicine. Through the Peter A. Silverman Centre for International Health, MSH has developed international partnerships including and beyond the health sector.

**Public Health Sciences ( University of Toronto )** has Canada 's largest concentration of academic public health sciences faculty and has experience in distance education, eHealth research and evaluation.