

Canadian first: The heart in telemonitoring

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The electrophysiology team at the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) recently performed the first implantation of a new type of cardiac pacemaker (Accent RF) in Canada. This landmark procedure was carried out on October 22, 2009 by Drs. Bernard Thibault and Peter Guerra. Both are cardiologists, electrophysiologists at the MHI and professors at the Université de Montréal. The Accent RF™ pacemaker uses wireless technology and is intended for people with bradycardia, an abnormally slow heart rate. The patient responded favourably to the procedure, and four additional implantations have since been performed, again with successful outcomes.

A major innovation in telemedicine

Developed by St-Jude Medical, this device provides electronic stimulation when the heart beats too slowly. It also makes it possible to monitor the patient's condition at a distance - a major practical advantage - which ensures more effective communication between the patient and the physician. Indeed, this cardiac pacemaker is the first to offer automatic test results and complete diagnostics that can be accessed via wireless communication from the physician's office or the patient's home. This device has been approved by Health Canada.

During regular follow-up appointments, data from the wireless pacemaker are automatically forwarded to the physician with no manipulation or patient interaction required, since the data are usually collected while the patient is sleeping at home. The physician can access all of the data by simply consulting the Merlin.net Patient Care Network.

In addition to these follow-up data scheduled at regular intervals, wireless communication makes it possible to alert the physician to important changes with the device or the patient's heart rate.

The [Merlin.net](#) Patient Care Network also allows physicians to compile more complete patient records by easily transferring data collected with the pacemaker into electronic health records. Physicians can thus consult information on patients at any time from an easy-to-access site.

"This new device offers a viable alternative in terms of diagnosis, monitoring and therapy by ensuring more effective and documented communication between patients and physicians," says Dr. Bernard Thibault. "Being able to monitor patients remotely lets us achieve important gains in effectiveness without compromising the quality of care to patients, who no longer have to travel just for routine examinations. The automatic alerts give patients greater peace of mind, since they can be assured that we will be advised if there are any changes with the device or their condition."

"I'm very happy to benefit from this new type of [pacemaker](#)," says Maurice Forest, the first patient to receive the device, which relies on wireless technology. "Just having it gives me a great sense of security. And since the monitoring can be done at a distance, I have true peace of mind, knowing that all of my symptoms are under continuous supervision. For me, it's like having a physician follow me on a daily basis."

Provided by University of Montreal

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