

Heart surgery wait times down in Alberta and BC

April 5 2011

New data from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Medicine shows that wait times for a number of heart surgeries have gone down close to 50 per cent in Alberta and British Columbia.

The objective of the study was to investigate wait times for percutaneous [coronary intervention](#) (PCI) and [coronary artery bypass](#) graft (CABG) surgery, after the patient has undergone diagnosis through a process called catheterization. PCI's are commonly referred to as [balloon angioplasty](#) and CABG's refer to open heart or bypass surgery.

The work was led by Danielle Southern , Dr. William Ghali, Dr. Merrill Knudtson and their team. It was published in the April edition of the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*.

"We are investing in cardiac care and it's positive to show strategic investments have been made and wait times have gone down," says Ghali, Director of the Calgary Institute for Population and Public Health (CIPPH) and member of the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta at the U of C.

The study speculates that the significant changes are a result of a balance between supply and demand. The supply would be attributed to the supply of more funding, more catheterization laboratories available, and more PCI's being performed.

"Over the duration of this study, evidence has been mounting confirming

the value of urgent access to PCI for patients with the more acute forms of [coronary artery disease](#). This realization has provided the greatest motivation for mobilizing additional resources," says Knudtson, one of the study's authors, and a member of the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta at the U of C.

The demand for cardiac procedures may have decreased slightly due to the decreased burden of cardiovascular disease relating to improved medical therapies and reduced numbers of ACS hospitalizations. Better post-procedure outcomes, like medications and innovations, are also leading to fewer repeat procedures.

The study was based on data collected from Alberta and B.C. only, due to the provinces' detailed database of patients undergoing cardiac procedures.

The study was funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research and Alberta Innovates Health Solutions.

- In Alberta, between April 1995 and March 2008, the median wait times for bypass surgery went down from 31 days to 13 – over 50 %
- In B.C., between April 2000 and March 2008, the median wait times for bypass surgery went down from 17 days to 11.

Provided by University of Calgary

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