




BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. BC Children's is an academic health centre affiliated with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the Child & Family Research Institute. For more information, please visit www.bcchildrens.ca.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, please visit www.phsa.ca.

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MEDIA RELEASE

October 9, 2009
For immediate release

Minimally invasive spinal surgery for scoliosis a first in Canada

Vancouver, B.C. – Orthopedic surgeons at BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, are the first to perform minimally invasive spinal surgery for scoliosis in Canada.

Scoliosis is a medical condition where the spine is curved (shaped like an "s") and may also be rotated. Surgery may be required to correct the curve in the spine.

"To access the spine and back muscles, we make three small minimally invasive incisions in the patient's back instead of one large incision," says Dr. Firoz Miyanji, Pediatric Spine Surgeon, BC Children's. "Then, we use a special technique to feed a rod to support the spine through the incisions and underneath the spinal muscles, using the natural muscle planes instead of extensively stripping the muscle off the bone. The rod allows for correction of the scoliosis."

Patients who have idiopathic scoliosis (no other underlying medical condition causing the curve) are the best candidates for this technique. With this minimally invasive technique, they experience less pain, less blood loss, and can get up and move around earlier, enabling them to go home sooner.

Dr. Miyanji performed this technique for the first time at BC Children's and in Canada on Carmen Stolk, an 18-year-old from Prince George. Because of this procedure, Carmen was able to recover more quickly without a stay in the pediatric intensive care unit. She had her first follow-up appointment at BC Children's on October 8, six weeks after the surgery. She has minimal scarring and has recovered well.

Thirty years ago, Carmen's mother, Donna Stolk, who also had scoliosis, had a rod inserted into her spine at BC Children's Hospital. "I was at BC Children's for three weeks on a Stryker frame and had to be turned every four hours," recalls Donna. "I was sent home on a flight to Kamloops, taking up 12 regular seats; on the floor of a float plane for two hours; and then put into the back of a pick-up truck to be driven to my house. I was in a full body cast on my back for two months and then a walking body cast for four. Recovering from my surgery took more than six months. Carmen was operated on a Monday and walked away Friday."

"The difference between Donna's and Carmen's experiences is a great example of how surgical procedures have improved," says Dr. Christopher Reilly, Head, Department of Orthopedics, BC Children's. "We have an excellent spinal surgery team at BC Children's Hospital, and we are pleased to be able to provide this type of surgery for our patients. This is a positive step in reducing wait time for certain types of scoliosis surgery as many of our patients with spinal deformities are candidates for this minimally invasive surgical procedure. We continue to work hard to provide the best care possible for the children of B.C."

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Note to editors:

Drs. Firoz Miyanji and Christopher Reilly are available for interviews.