

January 16, 2018

NEWS RELEASE

## Seeing Doctors through Telehealth Saves Time, Money and Winter Driving Stress

**Kootenay Boundary** – Getting to see your specialist for important health care in rural BC can be challenging, especially in the winter. Seeing your doctor through video conferencing can be the best option for many people.

Take expectant mom Natalie Santano who used telehealth video conferencing technology to connect with her specialist in Nelson – “It obviously saved our family a huge amount of time, money and the stress of driving over the pass in snowy weather. But it also made it possible for my midwife here in Creston to be at the virtual appointment with my obstetrician in Nelson. It was amazing the difference it made — she could ask questions and we could all work together to make decisions. It felt like we were a real team.”

A group of family physicians and specialists, Interior Health staff and patient representatives have been working on introducing new telehealth technology in Kootenay Boundary. The group hopes that Natalie’s experience becomes the norm, especially during the winter months. “Over the last couple of years, the team has been working on putting secure, private and efficient systems in place to help make video conferencing easier and more accessible to patients and doctors,” said Dr. Eddie Naude, a family physician in Midway, BC. “While sometimes an in-person consultation is required, many other consults can be done just as effectively via video conference; with a much better experience for our patients.”

The project, spearheaded by BC’s Shared Care Initiative, the Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice and Interior Health has implemented telehealth for a growing list of medical services, currently including: maternity care, urology, internal medicine, general surgery, anesthesiology, and pediatrics.

Heidi Scott, the patient representative in the telehealth implementation team adds, “After being diagnosed with MS, I had to see the specialist multiple times a year. Driving was very difficult on my body, and flying was much too unpredictable in the winter. And if I missed an appointment, it meant a much longer wait to see my doctor. Telehealth avoids all this, and makes it much more efficient for everyone.”

For patients interested in using telehealth, Ms. Scott emphasizes the importance of asking your health practitioner about telehealth, “With the newness of the technology, not all doctors know about the growing list of telehealth options. Our team is working hard to make sure the message gets out to practitioners, and we’re hoping patients will help by asking their doctor to check if telehealth is an option for them instead of traveling for an in-person appointment.”

If you are interested in using telehealth for your next specialist appointment, ask your family doctor. Or contact, Mona Mattei, [mmattei@divisionsbc.ca](mailto:mmattei@divisionsbc.ca) 250.443.1899.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Telehealth project was initiated by the *Kootenay Boundary Shared Care Initiative* and is composed of specialists, family physicians, Interior Health staff and patients.

Funding and support for the committee and this initiative is provided by [Shared Care Committee](#), a joint Doctors of BC/Ministry of Health partnership. The Committee's support enables family and specialist physicians in the Kootenay Boundary region to work together and collaborate with Interior Health in their communities to improve patient care.

**Interview Subjects:**

Natalie Santano - Patient

Dr. Eddie Naude, Midway GP

Heidi Scott - Patient and Telehealth Team Member

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