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## AHS program improves care for hip and knee patients

*Albertans now waiting less time for surgery and going home sooner*

CALGARY – Albertans are waiting less time for hip and knee surgeries, and going home sooner after their procedures, since the launch of a provincewide Alberta Health Services (AHS) program designed to improve the quality and accessibility of orthopedic care.

“I would like to thank all of the front-line health care workers that have made these improvements to wait times possible through their dedication to patient care,” says Health Minister Fred Horne.

“As a government, we’re committed to improving the performance of our health care system and today’s update on hip and knee surgeries shows that we’re moving in the right direction. I’m sure this is welcomed news for the many Albertans that have this type of surgery every year and are able to get back to their normal lives sooner because of this program.”

Kelly Anhelher is among the thousands of Albertans who have benefited from the Hip and Knee Replacement Program. He says his quality of life has significantly improved since hip surgery last month.

“I could tell how much better it was as soon as I woke up,” says the 50-year-old Calgarian. “The surgery was scheduled quickly, the procedure went well and the recovery has been good. It has all been a very positive experience.”

The Hip and Knee Replacement Program has reduced the time between the decision to have surgery and the surgery date to 19.2 weeks, down 12 per cent or almost three weeks from when the program launched in 2010.

Over the same period:

- The average hospital stay for hip and knee patients has been reduced from 4.9 days for hip replacements and 4.6 days for knee replacements, to 4.1 days for both. Almost all patients returned to normal function for their age, indicating no ill effects from the shorter hospital stay.
- The patient satisfaction rate has increased from 86 per cent to 98 per cent.
- Rate of hospital readmission following surgery, already low at 4.3 per cent, has improved even further to 4.1 per cent.

“This program has far exceeded our goals,” says Dr. Don Dick, Senior Medical Director of AHS’ Bone and Joint Health Strategic Clinical Network, which operates the program.

“It really is a win-win project. We are always focused firstly on improving care for patients but we also need to ensure we get the best value for our health care dollars and help make our system sustainable. The hip and knee replacement program does both.”

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Reductions in length of hospital stay have freed up about 33,000 days of hospital bed space since 2010, enabling AHS to perform more than 1,600 additional hip and knee surgeries with the same bed capacity. About 10,000 elective hip and knee replacements are performed annually in Alberta.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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