

A2 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017 REGINA LEADER-POST

CITY+
REGION

The Mackenzie Art Gallery is transforming to be a place of community engagement, where people can come and explore new ideas and new opportunities.

ANTHONY KIENDL,
gallery CEO

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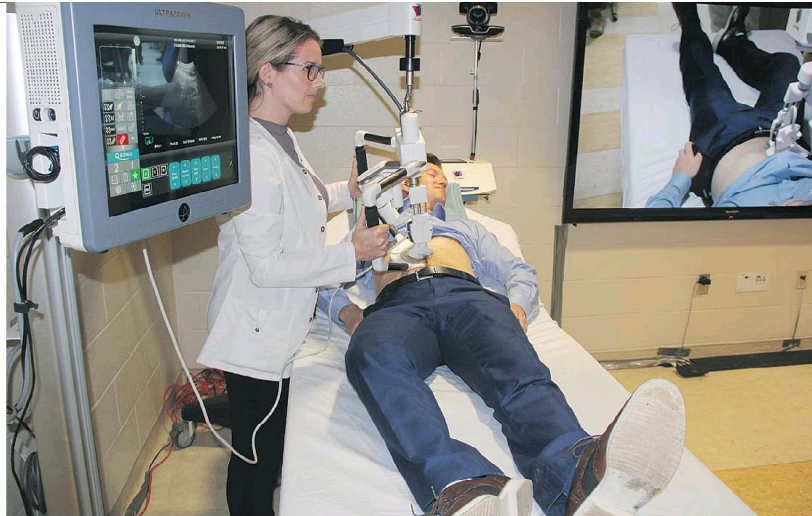
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Richard Gauvreau, a robotics engineering student at the University of Saskatchewan, gets an ultrasound from licensed nurse Cheri Derksen during a demonstration of a new remote ultrasound system. *MORGAN MODJESKI*

System puts Sask. at forefront of remote ultrasound imaging

'Amazing machine' will allow patients to receive faster diagnosis and treatment

MORGAN MODJESKI

A new ultrasound system at the University of Saskatchewan is one of the first of its kind in North America intended solely to deliver real-time medical assessments.

Proponents say it will transform aspects of health care in Saskatchewan's remote and northern communities.

Thanks to a \$300,000 gift from the Leslie and Irene Dubé Foundation Inc. to the Royal Uni-

versity Hospital Foundation's GREATER Campaign, the University of Saskatchewan and Royal University Hospital now have an ultrasound system that allows a radiologist to conduct an ultrasound on a patient from across a room — or across the province — using tele-robotic technology.

"This is a game changer," Dr. Veronica McKinney, director of Northern Medical Services, said of the technology, called the MEL-ODY ultrasound imaging system.

It will have a significant effect on health care in the north, as the machine will allow patients to get a diagnosis and treatment faster than if they had to travel to centres like Saskatoon, she said. It also allows patients to receive care in their communities from people they know.

"The faster we can get the care, the better the outcome for everybody involved," she said.

The system is made up of three components. The imaging unit, located in a remote community, will be positioned by a nurse or general practitioner and controlled by a radiologist remotely using an "imitation probe;" a video-conferencing

system allows for real-time communication.

The location for the device is still being determined, but staff hope to have the system in place within the next few months. As a result of the gift, a remote presence technology room at the U of S will now be named the Leslie and Irene Dubé Foundation Remote Presence Medicine Centre.

Calling it an "amazing machine," Dr. Ivar Mendez, the unified department head of surgery for the Saskatchewan Health Region and the U of S, said the system will help young mothers in the north by identifying potential health complications earlier and saving them time and money.

"The issue of cost-effectiveness is very, very important. We spend millions of dollars transporting patients from their own communities to the centralized system and it's not that effective," Mendez said.

"Saskatchewan is now leading the province in the implementation of remote presence technology in the country," he said. "People from across the country have come to learn what we're doing in terms of getting a model that could potentially be implemented in all jurisdictions."

Richard Gauvreau, a robotics engineering summer student at the U of S, helped set up the robotics used in Tuesday's demonstration. He also underwent an ultrasound with the new remote system.

"I assumed it would feel odd," he said. "Because the nurse was standing there, it feels just like a normal ultrasound procedure — it's just that with the robotics going, there would be someone else controlling it. But while you're a patient it literally just feels like the nurse is in control."

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