

MEDIA RELEASE

Pritchard Foundation Gift Elevates KGH Microbiology Lab to Rival Best in Canada

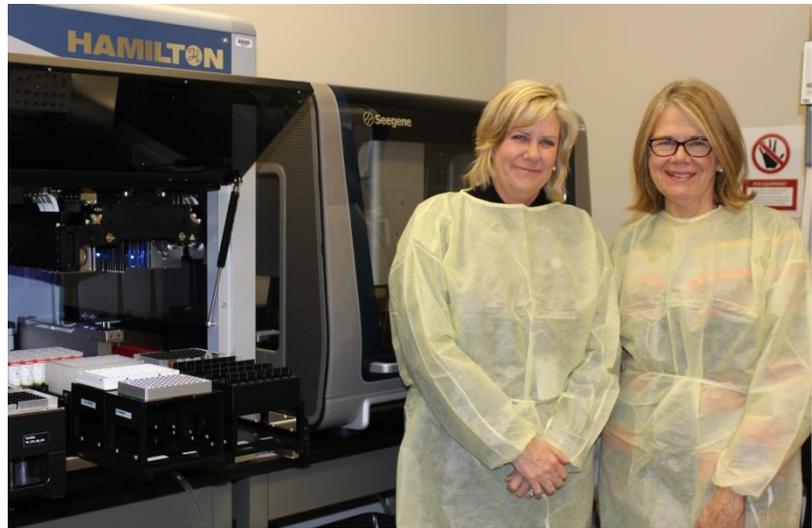
KELOWNA, BC, December 10, 2018 - Thanks to the generosity of The Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation, the Larissa Yarr Medical Microbiology laboratory at Kelowna General Hospital has even greater capacity to accurately diagnose and treat this season's nastiest viral influenza and gastro-intestinal bugs.

This fall, the Pritchard's gifted a second suite of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technologies to the lab, after donating the first in late 2016. These highly advanced diagnostic instruments allow KGH microbiologists to detect and identify specific antibiotic resistance gene mutations, bacteria and viruses faster than ever before.

The gift will also support the Pritchard Foundation's generous provision to UBC Okanagan's Department of Biology to fund a four-month placement for two microbiology co-op students in the lab at KGH. Working under the mentorship of two of western Canada's leading microbiologists, Dr. Edith Blondel-Hill and Dr. Amanda Wilmer, the students not only learn their specialty in a practical setting, but increase the lab's capacity to undertake research on the PCR.

Before PCR came to KGH, most viral diagnostics were sent to Vancouver for testing in a reference facility, causing delays due to the transport required. PCR instrumentation has allowed for significantly increased capacity to test for viral illnesses directly at KGH. When time is of the essence, having immediate access to this kind of advanced technology dramatically impacts the clinical course of a patient.

"2017/18 was the heaviest influenza season in ten years", reports Dr. Wilmer, Medical Microbiologist and Discipline Director of Interior Health Medical Microbiology. "We recorded significant improvement in turn-around time, with most testing being performed in one day. For reference, these tests would have taken 3-4 days before we had PCR."



Interior Health CEO, Susan Brown and Deborah Buszard, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UBC-O, stand in front of the new Seegen system, part of the advanced diagnostic PCR instrumentation gifted to the KGH micro-biology lab by the Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation.

The addition of the newest PCR equipment will enable the lab to increase its overall testing capacity, allowing microbiology lab technologists to run multiple different types of specimens at the same time, all while maintaining the same staffing levels and ensuring that diagnostic capacity is not compromised should one of the instruments fail.

“With the acquisition of this equipment, the microbiology lab at KGH now rivals any of the large tertiary hospitals in Canada in terms of our capacity for rapid and accurate diagnosis,” says Doug Rankmore, CEO of the KGH Foundation. “The Pritchard Foundation has been instrumental in making this happen. We are incredibly grateful for their leadership and generosity.”

The KGH Foundation is an independent, volunteer-driven charitable organization committed to enhancing the delivery of healthcare to the patients of Kelowna General Hospital and its associated facilities.

Contact:

Shauna Nyrose

Communications Director, KGH Foundation

p | 250.862.4300 local 7058

c | 250.801.0886

e | shauna.nyrose@interiorhealth.ca

INFO SHEET – NEW PCR INSTRUMENT AT KELOWNA GENERAL HOSPITAL KGH DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY

The Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation's gift supported the acquisition of a sophisticated piece of technology/ instrumentation that allows the microbiology lab at KGH to perform PCR, or amplify DNA, to detect and identify specific genome.

What is PCR and why is it important?

PCR stands for Polymerase Chain Reaction. Performing PCR has many practical applications and benefits including the locating of specific gene mutations and the diagnoses of viruses including HIV, SARS, H5N1, bacteria analysis for resistant genes in real time. This means the bio-medical team at KGH is able to make diagnoses faster than ever before, which allows them to treat these illnesses with greater efficiency.

In addition to influenza and other respiratory viruses and bacteria, this system provides capacity to test for gastrointestinal pathogens, resistance factors in superbugs and much more. While the new PCR instrument improves the capacity and range of testing that can be done at KGH, it is significantly more cost effective to operate.

With this acquisition, the microbiology lab at KGH is considered to be one of the most advanced in Canada.

The Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation

Colin Pritchard, a retired lawyer and UBC alumnus and his wife Lois, founded The Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation in 2007. A snapshot of the Pritchard Foundation's philanthropy over the past eleven years reveals a commitment to working in partnership with multiple organizations to profoundly impact the delivery of health care in our community both for today and for generations to come.

The Colin and Lois Pritchard Foundation has made some truly unique acquisitions in diagnostics possible at KGH including; the Endoscopic Ultrasound in 2015, which allows highly detailed gastrointestinal imaging; the MALDI TOF analyzer in 2013 that speeds bacterial identification; and Telehealth and Video Conferencing in 2012, allowing for remote specialist consulting and diagnostic work to be done where people live.

Most notably, the Pritchard Foundation continues to demonstrate leadership in funding projects that harmonize learning and research opportunities for UBC-O students with clinical practice at Kelowna General Hospital.