



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate distribution

**THE MONTREAL HEART INSTITUTE HAS A CONCRETE ACTION PLAN
FOR REDUCING CARDIAC SURGERY WAIT LISTS**

Montreal, March 11, 2010 – At a press conference held at the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) this morning, Dr. Michel Carrier, cardiac surgeon, and Dr. Normand Racine, cardiologist and Head of the Department of Medicine, along with Robert Busilacchi, Executive Director, gave an update on the current situation in cardiac surgery at the Institute.

Dr. Carrier explained that there are two main reasons why the wait list at the MHI has gradually lengthened over the past two years. First, the shortage of intensive care nurses in Quebec means fewer patients can be treated on the operating table. The other reason is one of circumstance: three out of four operating rooms have been accessible and available for part of the past year, because of construction work on a new surgical unit. The situation is now entirely normalized, and the four operating rooms have been fully operational since January 2010.

With regard to the nursing staff situation, Executive Director Busilacchi noted that the MHI has recruited a record number of nurses over the past two years, with a retention rate after one year of 83%, which is an excellent result for this profession. However, nurses working in intensive care require additional special training, with the extra time that this implies.

Dr. Racine added that “the MHI does not use nurses from private agencies, because we prefer to work with dedicated, motivated teams of nurses, something that we are privileged to have. Moreover, reliance on mandatory overtime is quite rare; in fact this practice has been formally prohibited at the Institute for the past three or four years, apart from exceptional cases.”

A concrete action plan that is generating concrete results

The successful recruiting of nursing staff over the past two years, combined with the return to normal in the four operating rooms in the new surgical unit will enable continued reduction of wait lists and their normalization. On January 30, 2010, there were 237 patients awaiting cardiac surgery at the Institute. As of March 11, that number dropped to 217. Of that total, 28 patients are not available to be operated on as scheduled, for personal or medical reasons. Between 90% and 100% of patients who must undergo surgery within a six-week period receive that surgery. Meanwhile, 74 patients scheduled to be operated on within an intended period of three months have exceeded that limit. The situation is expected to improve considerably and return to normal over the next few months.

As part of the press conference, journalists were able to get a first-hand look at activities in the new surgical unit. Some work remains to be completed, and it will be wrapped up by this spring.

Dr. Carrier concluded by acknowledging that “the problem is real, but the action plan now in effect will enable us to correct the situation. In addition, our physicians, nurses, other professionals, and administration are collaborating very closely indeed to ensure that things return to normal as quickly as possible. This is an ongoing priority at the MHI.”

About the Montreal Heart Institute

Founded in 1954 by Dr. Paul David, the Montreal Heart Institute constantly aims for the highest standards of excellence in the cardiovascular field through its leadership in prevention, ultra-specialized care, professional training, clinical and fundamental research, and assessment of new technologies. The Institute is part of a vast network of excellence in health formed by the Université de Montréal and its affiliated institutions. To learn more about the Institute, please visit our website at www.icm-mhi.org.

- 30 -

Information: Rachel Ladouceur-Girard
Interim communications officer
Montreal Heart Institute
514-376-3330, ext. 2641
rachel.ladouceur-girard@icm-mhi.org