



*Note to assignment editors and health journalists*

*Dr. Peter Guerra and the patient are available for interviews at the Montreal Heart Institute.*

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

**A PATIENT AT THE MONTREAL HEART INSTITUTE  
BENEFITS FROM A CANADIAN FIRST**

**CRYOABLATION USED TO SUCCESSFULLY TREAT  
THE MOST COMMON FORM OF ARRHYTHMIA**

**Montreal, February 7, 2007** – Last Friday, February 2, the electrophysiology team at the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) used cryoablation (ablation using cold) to treat a patient suffering from atrial fibrillation, the most common form of cardiac arrhythmia, and one associated with significant morbidity. The team was composed of Dr. Peter Guerra, head of the electrophysiology department, and Dr. Marc Dubuc, cardiologist and specialist in electrophysiology. This was a first in Canada, conducted as part of a multicenter research project. The patient responded favourably to the procedure.

**A new technique using cold as a new form of energy**

The 56-year-old female patient from Repentigny had suffered from arrhythmia for a number of years, and medications had been ineffective, so a catheter procedure was therefore necessary. Dr. Dubuc, one of the pioneers in using cold to treat arrhythmias (cryoablation), as well as Dr. Guerra, elected in this patient's case to apply this new technique of ablation using cold rather than heat. To do so, they used a new catheter made by Cryocath, a Montreal company.

Since atrial fibrillation comes from the four pulmonary veins that ensure blood circulation from the lungs to the heart, this new balloon-tipped catheter is inserted into each of these veins so that a refrigerant can then circulate in the balloon and, by cold, destroy all the regions of the heart that can trigger the arrhythmia. With this new treatment, the cardiologist can potentially treat the patient more quickly and efficiently, by applying cold 360° around each of the veins rather than proceeding point by point as in heat ablation. As a result, the risks of complication associated with this treatment, including the risk of recurrence, could be reduced significantly.

## **A cardiac disease that affects one person in 20**

It is estimated that one person in 20 will suffer from atrial fibrillation in his or her lifetime. In Canada, roughly 250, 000 persons suffer from this arrhythmia. The main symptoms of atrial fibrillation are palpitations, dizziness and shortness of breath. The heart begins to beat very quickly, irregularly and unpredictably. Its effect is to weaken the heart and promote the formation of blood clots that can cause paralysis as well as peripheral or cerebral embolism (CVA). Up to ten years ago, atrial fibrillation was treated only with medications, but since 1997, radiofrequency ablation using heat has been used in patients who did not respond to conventional treatment with pills.

“Since atrial fibrillation is the most frequently encountered arrhythmia in the clinical setting and because it can be very incapacitating, this new form of therapy appears quite promising”, said Dr. Guerra. “Preliminary trials conducted in the United States and in Europe have shown that the procedure has many potential benefits. We are pleased to now embark on this clinical trial in Canada.”

## **About the Montreal Heart Institute**

Founded in 1954, the Montreal Heart Institute constantly aims for the highest standards of excellence in the cardiovascular field through its leadership in prevention, ultra-specialized care, training of professionals, clinical and fundamental research and assessment of new technologies. It is affiliated with the Université de Montréal, and its clinical outcomes are among the best in the world. For more information on the Institute, please visit our website at [www.icm-mhi.org](http://www.icm-mhi.org).

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