

KGH readies for medical students

Hospital to receive its initial group of 1st-year students in January 2012

By J.P. SQUIRE
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The medical students are coming.

The first fresh faces from UBC's medical school will arrive in the Southern Interior in September. These third-year students will go to hospitals in Vernon, Kamloops and Trail in pilot projects.

The first wave of first-year medical students will arrive in Kelowna in January 2012, forever changing Kelowna General Hospital.

The process of choosing the

first-year students for UBC's southern medical program has already begun.

Dr. Allan Jones, regional associate dean for UBC's Interior faculty of medicine, spent the last two weekends in Vancouver interviewing prospective students with the associate deans responsible for the Vancouver Fraser, Vancouver Island and northern B.C. medical programs.

The 1,800 people who have applied to the UBC medical school have been shortlisted to 600.



Photo contributed

Third-year UBC medical students train at Kelowna General Hospital. About 200 UBC medical students have received training at KGH during the past three years.

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Students

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Of those 600, 288 are chosen to enter the faculty of medicine and 32 students will be assigned to the southern medical program in the Okanagan, said Jones.

"This was the first time we were represented at the admissions interview sessions," he said. "My role is to try and convince the very best students — the ones I think are adventuresome and who want to be first at something — to really take a strong look at our programs and rank us as their top choice."

After ranking the four programs by preference, students will learn on May 1 if they were accepted and where they will study for the next four years.

On Sept. 1, all first-year students will go to the Vancouver campus for four months. On Jan. 1, 2012, students will be divided among the four programs.

Interior program students will study at two Kelowna sites: the \$28-million, 4,266-square-metre Health Sciences Centre at UBC Okanagan campus, now one month from completion, and the 3,200-square-metre clinical academic campus at Kelowna General Hospital, now finished.

During their first two years, they will spend two-thirds of their time at UBCO, and the balance at KGH and local doctors' offices, said Jones.

"One of their courses involves being in family doctors' offices for a half-day a week, so we are busy recruiting. We're really hoping to draw from a wide area, that some of our doctors in Winfield, West Kelowna and Vernon will participate. We do have some signed up from all of those sites."

The third year involves clinical training, said Jones.

"We have a very, very unique, I think, and exciting model. One of our important mandates is to expose students to smaller communities so they can see the benefits, the type of medicine practised and to potentially really look at smaller communities as a practice potential when they finish their residency."

Rather than have students in those smaller communities for only two weeks at a time, UBC officials are looking at the possibility of students living and studying in those communities for their entire third year.

UBC describes its undergraduate program as "distributed" among four B.C. campuses.

"In a sense, we would be having a distributed campus within our program," said Jones, with the idea the Kelowna students would go to other communities in their third year.

"Kamloops has an education committee and team that has been working hard over the past year

and is starting to take third-year students from Vancouver as pilot projects to iron out their readiness," said Jones.

Vernon and Trail hospitals will start taking third-year students from the Vancouver Fraser, Vancouver Island and northern B.C. programs in September, even before KGH gets its first-year students. Two will go to Vernon and two to Trail in pilot projects.

"There's been a great interest in the student body to really take a look at that," said Jones.

Fifteen to 20 students checked out Vernon Jubilee Hospital on Feb. 19 and 20, and 11 students went to Trail last weekend.

"In their fourth year, students are encouraged to study in centres of excellence as they seek out their career path for residency. Someone interested in pediatrics could get some training in Kelowna, but could also do a month of training in Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon or even overseas," said Jones.

By 2014, the southern medical program is expected to have 128 students involved in four years of training — 32 in each year.

The arrival of the first 32 in January 2012 will have "a fair impact" on KGH, he said.

"One, you need space for the additional learners, particularly, in operating theatres. They are not going to do major surgery on patients, naturally, but they are certainly going to be observing and potentially holding retractors or suturing a little bit of skin as surgeons close."

Students do take a little extra time as learners, he admitted, so everyone must work together to bring learners into their lives without slowing down or interfering with the care of patients.

"It's quite a juggling act. Our doctors are working with nursing staff and the health authority to minimize any impact or delay in care, particularly in the ORs. That's a tricky one. A few new operating theatres in the new buildings will take some of the pressures off."

The other aspect is students learn medicine best when they are caring for patients, he said.

"So, we count on the community of patients in Kelowna to support learners being involved in their care. Naturally, we ask their permission. Should they not feel comfortable, it's not forced on them. We hope the community will embrace us."

However, there is already a strong track record at KGH and with local doctors, he said.

"We've had over 200 learners here in the last three years, so it's not new to the community. At the same time, students can be a little bit scary because they are very bright and they know lots of stuff, so they do challenge us as doctors, and you have to be ready for that challenge," he said.