

# New medical school may attract more local doctors

By DON PLANT  
The Daily Courier

Ashley Shaw was prepared to study medicine in Vancouver or Edmonton, but the new medical school in Kelowna will allow her to visit her family in Chase every weekend.

The 24-year-old is one of 32 students — seven of whom are from Interior B.C. — entering the inaugural medical program at UBC Okanagan. Shaw plans to move to Kelowna when her studies begin here in January and set up a practice nearby once she completes her studies.

**Okanagan medical school to welcome 32 students**  
"Definitely somewhere in the Interior. Most of my family's here; I grew up here. I don't mind travelling, but I don't want to move all the way across the country," she said after a tour of the new Health Sciences Centre at UBCO on Monday.

The town of Chase started a program to attract doctors there because most come and go after a few years. The B.C. government expanded the province's medical program to Kelowna as a way to attract Interior students willing to practise close to home.

"I hope it will help," Shaw said of the new southern medical program.

"I think it will definitely improve the odds of people from this area settling here . . . especially if they have family in the area."

Next week, Shaw and 31 other students begin their first year of medicine at UBC in Vancouver. When they transfer to Kelowna after Christmas, they'll work with doctors at patient bedside and take in lectures in state-of-the-art theatres at UBCO.

The TV technology allows one lecturer from anywhere in the province to teach 288 students in Prince George, Victoria, Vancouver and Kelowna at the same time. If a Kelowna student has a question, he or she can press a microphone and broadcast it across the province via a live video feed.

## Medical

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The new medical school is one of four campuses whose operating budget is \$40-60 million, said Jones. The 32 students in Kelowna will spend two thirds of their time at UBCO and a third in clinical placements.

They'll work in a family physician's office for half a day a week. Or they'll learn how to conduct clinical examinations and how to act professionally at the clinical academic campus beside Kelowna General Hospital.

By the third year, students will spend all their time in the hospital and ambulatory sites. Some will work part-time in Vernon, Kamloops and other Interior communities.

The goal, said Dr. Allan Jones, is to attract students who will consider staying in the area — especially smaller communities.

"If they stay there long enough, there's a fair chance they may look at returning there once they've finished training," said Jones, regional associate dean of UBC's southern medical program. "Admissions . . . keeps its eye out for students from rural and remote B.C. as part of the admissions program."

A hundred faculty — three times the number of students — will help teach them. Most are family physicians who will show them the practical side of delivering medicine at the bedside.

"If you're in to see your family doctor on a Wednesday afternoon, we're most hopeful you'll allow your family physician visit you with a student," Jones said.

Interior students include three from Kelowna and four from Summerland, Penticton and Chase. By their fourth year, as many as 128 students will fill the now-shiny lecture theatres in Kelowna.

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Dr. Allan Jones, regional associate dean of UBC's southern medical program, talks to first-year medical students at the new Health Sciences Centre at UBCO.