

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Weight Loss Surgery now available in Okanagan**

Canadians looking for a safe, effective and long-term solution to weight loss are turning to bariatric surgery in large numbers. One surgery that is gaining a great deal of interest, and which is now available in Kelowna is laparoscopic gastric banding (LAGB).

A Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric Band is an inflatable silicone device that is placed around the top portion of the stomach, via laparoscopic surgery. Laparoscopic surgery, also called minimally invasive surgery, is a modern surgical technique in which small incisions are made to allow surgical tools into the abdomen rather than making a large incision. The recovery after banding is relatively short. The surgery typically takes approximately one hour, and patients are often released from hospital the same day or the day following surgery and could return to their regular routine within days or a week. The adjustable band creates a pouch at the top of the stomach which restricts the amount of food a patient ingests at one time.

LAGB is becoming popular due to the remarkable results in the majority of patients. On average patients can expect to lose approximately 40 to 50% of their excess weight in the first year after surgery.

While LAGB surgery is much simpler than other operations for obesity such as gastric bypass or stapling, like any surgery it should not be entered into lightly. One of the most important aspects of the surgery is what happens before and after the procedure. Dr. Arya Sharma, MD/PhD, FRCPC, Professor of Medicine & Chair for Cardiovascular Obesity Research and Management at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, is one of the leading experts on weight management in Canada. He explains, "Obesity surgery is not just about surgery. In fact, even the most enterprising bariatric surgeons will readily agree that the actual surgery is just a small technical piece in the overall treatment plan."

"With the "sensational" results of obesity surgery being publicized in the media," he continues, "it is not surprising that expansion of bariatric surgery is receiving increasing support. In light of these developments it may be time for a word of caution. "

"Done in the wrong patients with no or little long-term follow up, what could be a life saving operation can become a disaster - and weight regain is perhaps the least that can go wrong. Much more severe and potentially devastating are the nutritional deficiencies and the psychological and social consequences that are common after surgery" Dr. Sharma states.

Heading the LAGB surgery in Kelowna is Dr. Andy Klufftinger, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Dr. Klufftinger is an honors graduate of the University of British Columbia Medical School. He has been practicing for over 17 years and has successfully completed over 1,000 advanced laparoscopic surgeries. Dr. Klufftinger also strongly emphasizes the importance of ensuring that patients are well prepared for the lifestyle changes that are required.

Prior to surgery, patients in the Okanagan will go through a comprehensive 3 to 6 month program including health assessments, exercise sessions, nutritional counseling, and emotional & disordered eating education. The goal of the pre-surgical program is to ensure that patients are able to make the lifestyle changes that are necessary for the band to be effective. After surgery, patients are enrolled in an 18 month program that will provide the support that patients need to take control of their health and weight for the long term. iQuest Healthcare and Fitness Centre in Kelowna and City Center Health and Fitness in Penticton will be teaming up to offer the programs to residents throughout the Okanagan.

Kirby Layng, managing partner of City Centre Health and Fitness says "We have been offering our Medical Weight Loss Program for under one year now and we are pleased to have teamed up with iQuest to expand our offerings of Lifestyle Change Programs. Our unique partnership with iQuest will allow the residents of the South Okanagan to have access to a number of iQuest services previously only available in Kelowna."

In British Columbia, LAGB is not an insured service covered under the Medical Services Plan. Therefore patients are required to pay for the surgery. Some extended health plans may pay for a portion, and the surgery is tax deductible as a medical procedure. While the cost of the surgery and the pre and post surgical program is significant, it provides a permanent solution so proves to be a good value over the long term. Savings include decreased food costs, and less reliance on prescription medicines to treat co-morbidities. More importantly patients find they are more productive and have a much improved overall quality of life.

For further information or to book a pre-screening interview call iQuest Healthcare at 250-860-3413 or go to [iQuesthealth.ca](http://iQuesthealth.ca). One accepted into the Surgery Program residents of the South Okanagan will attend City Center Health and Fitness in Penticton for many of their services.