



PAUL LINDEN, KGH MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR TRAUMA SERVICES, SIMULATES PATIENT CARE IN THIS ACTION-PACKED COMPOSITE PHOTO OF THE HOSPITAL'S NEW TRAUMA ROOM FUNDED BY THE CHARLES FIPKE FOUNDATION.

DIAMOND DOLLARS SAVE LIVES

Fipke finances best little trauma room in the country

■ When an emergency room doctor and a millionaire philanthropist meet—in an ambulance—the long-term results can be great for the community. One such acquaintance grew into friendship that, 18 years later, provided Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) with a state of the art trauma room.

“I first met Charles Fipke when I was working as a ski doc at Big White,” says Paul Linden, medical director for trauma services at KGH. “Chuck dislocated his shoulder and wasn’t faring very well, so I rode down in the ambulance with him to administer medication and monitor him. At the time I had no idea I was riding with a celebrity,” says Linden, referring to Fipke’s rise to fame fol-

lowing his discovery of diamonds in Canada’s Arctic in the late 1990s.

The polar bear emblazoned gems produced by his Ekati mine made Chuck a legend in geologists’ circles, while his contributions to his alma mater, the University of British Columbia, and now the KGH Foundation have endeared him locally.

Inspired by the quality of practitioners at KGH and keen to give back to the community, Fipke and Linden hatched a plan to build the best trauma room the philanthropist’s money could buy. The official opening of what is being hailed as Canada’s best equipped resuscitation room took place in mid-June.

“In medicine we divide up

the disease processes,” Linden explains. “There’s trauma, in which an external force happens to the body, like being hit by a car, getting stabbed, falling from a height or being burned. Then there are medical emergencies requiring resuscitation from things like cardiac arrests, strokes and serious infections like sepsis (blood infection) or meningitis.”

While KGH has two other trauma rooms in operation, the new building was designed to accommodate a third because, along with Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops, Kelowna is one of the major trauma referral centres for Interior Health.

Filled with highly technical equipment, “this room is designed to save lives—and to save them quickly,” says Linden.

A dedicated ultrasound fixed on a boom allows doctors to diagnose bleeding in the abdomen or around the heart or to see collapsed lungs. The sophisticated machinery also allows specialists to insert catheters in the neck and other central IV lines.

“Having the right equipment, right here, will literally make the difference between a good outcome and a very bad one,” says Linden.

A portable, digital, X-ray machine and specialized system (Gaymar) to warm hypothermia patients at a controlled rate or conversely to cool patients suffering cardiac arrest, make the room distinct.

“We see over 1,000 moderately injured or sick patients a year,” Linden explains. “About 200 of those are acute, which amounts to about six patients a day that might be treated here.”

Depending on what lands patients in a resuscitation room, the chances of dying can be very high. Thanks to a million dollar donation from the Charles Fipke Foundation, KGH’s new trauma room aims to increase the odds of living. —Shannon Linden