Sunnybrook
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SUNNYBROOK IMPROVES ARRHYTHMIA DIAGNOSIS

TORONTO, March 12, 2009 **–** Cardiologists at Sunnybrook's Schulich Heart Centre are the first in Canada to surgically implant a new type of heart monitor that will improve diagnosis of patients with potential heart problems.

The implantable cardiac monitoring device records the heart's electrical activity in order to help physicians diagnose whether or not common symptoms like syncope (fainting), dizziness, palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath and unexplained seizure-like episodes are related to cardiac problems.

"We see a very high rate of hospitalizations for people experiencing unexplained fainting, dizziness and shortness of breath," says Dr. Eugene Crystal, head of Cardiac Arrhythmia Services at Sunnybrook. It can be difficult to tell if their symptoms are related to the heart because those symptoms could be caused by any number of issues and may only present on rare occasion. Even after a physical examination and electrocardiogram evaluation, approximately half of all cases of unexplained syncope go undiagnosed."

The Confirm™ Implantable Cardiac Monitor is about the size of a computer thumb drive and is implanted under the skin in the upper chest region. It can be implanted in an outpatient procedure under local anesthesia. The device continuously records and stores information about a patient's heart activity in a looping memory for up to three years. By analyzing the information stored in the device, physicians are able to determine whether an episode was caused by an abnormal heart rhythm and if so, recommend the best cardiac treatment options for the patient.

Although similar monitors are available in Canada, this device has unique diagnostic benefits. It can more accurately sense cardiac signals, enabling physicians to program the monitor to sense small and wide-ranging signals. Additionally, the device has a life-span of up to three years compared with the 18 month life-span of similar devices.

"Patients may only experience one or two episodes in the span a couple of years so the problem with implanting a monitor that only lasts up to 18 months is that you might miss the event altogether," says Dr. Crystal." The increased sensitivity of this monitor and the extended life-span will give us more accurate and more comprehensive data about our patients' hearts."

Data stored in the device is retrieved by a specialized computer at the clinic or sent to the physician over the telephone, providing physicians with a more continuous view of what's happening with patients between office visits.

-30-

Media Contact:
Laurie Legere
416.480.4040