

## Attention News Editors

For Immediate Release

### Managing Health Care Waiting Lists

**Calgary** February 28 /CNW/ — Today the Western Canada Waiting List Project (WCWL) released its second report on improving the fairness of the health care system so that access to care would be timely and prioritized on the basis of urgency. In its 2001 report, WCWL presented urgency scoring systems to help set priorities and manage waiting lists.

“Ensuring patients most in need are treated first is an important principle behind WCWL’s work,” said Dr. Tom Noseworthy, director of the Centre for Health and Policy Studies at the University of Calgary and chair of the WCWL.

“The work we are reporting today is an important first step toward the development of benchmark waiting times. However, important factors such as staffing, financial resources and impact on other services were not considered in our method; it would be premature to suggest these are ready for use in Canada today.”

So how long should Canadians wait for health care? “We developed a new methodology that combines the input of physicians, patients and the public with the WCWL scoring systems and proposed maximum waits for two types of surgery,” said Dr. Noseworthy. For hip and knee replacement, the range is from four weeks for the most urgent patients to twenty weeks for the least urgent. For cataract surgery, the range is from four weeks for the most urgent to 12 weeks for the least urgent

Today’s report, *WCWL - Moving Forward*, also describes how the western provinces and regional health authorities have used the WCWL priority scoring systems. As well, it shows how they can be adapted to improve the referral process from the family doctor to specialists.

The Western Canada Waiting List Project is a collaborative endeavour of researchers, medical associations, governments and regional health authorities and was funded by Health Canada, and the four western provincial Ministries of Health. This phase of the project was launched in 2003.

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*WCWL - Moving Forward* is available at: [www.wewl.ca](http://www.wewl.ca)