RESEARCH SUMMARY:

At the Heart of Care

Dr. Chisholm is behind a history of firsts at St. Michael’s.

If there is a way to offer patients at risk for heart failure another option than conventional surgery, chances are Dr. Robert Chisholm is behind it. He has been part of some of St. Michael’s biggest “firsts” in interventional cardiology, giving patients hope for a better quality of life.

His latest is performing St. Michael’s first Percutaneous Aortic Valve Replacement (PAVR), putting the Hospital in a select group of facilities in Canada that can do this procedure. “It was a great day for our patients and our team,” says Dr. Chisholm. “It means we can give patients who may not be suited for a conventional surgical aortic valve replacement another option.”

Dr. Chisholm performed the first coronary angioplasty at St. Michael’s in 1980. Since then, he has likely performed more coronary interventions than anyone in Canada. He is known for extending angioplasty and stenting to high-risk patients, who are often turned down for the procedure. In 1991, he performed the first successful angioplasty in Canada on a very ill patient using partial cardiopulmonary bypass support. He was also one of the first in Canada to adapt the radial (arm) approach to angioplasty, which is now the preferred technique. In 2006, he led St. Michael’s in performing device closures of congenital heart defects, making the Hospital one of only a few places in Canada providing a full spectrum of interventional techniques.

In 1994, Dr. Chisholm performed the first adult valvuloplasty in Canada. One of his greatest clinical successes was another first—opening the valve of a critically ill pregnant woman using the Inoue balloon technique, which he introduced to Canada.

A founding member of the Cardiac Care Network of Ontario, instrumental in reducing wait times for cardiac procedures in Ontario, he also founded the Canadian Society of Interventional Cardiologists and was an advisor to implement the first coronary angioplasty program without on-site surgery in Ontario.

Dr. Chisholm takes great pride in the interventional training program at St. Michael’s, recognized as one of the premiere programs in the country. He was awarded the Canadian Cardiovascular Society Distinguished teacher Award in 2007.

Dr. Stuart Hutchison, former head of Echocardiography at St. Michael’s said it best in a textbook he published on pericardial diseases. In a dedication he wrote: “To Bob Chisholm, an inspired and inspiring physician, colleague, and friend, a man of insuppressible alacrity, integrity, and loyalty, and the best cath lab director and echo lab director one could ever hope to work with.”