



Dr Albert Chan shows off a metal frame (shown here in a fully expanded state) that acts as a self-expanding "scaffold" for the natural tissue heart valve (obtained from the heart of a pig) to be put into place in replacement of the patients diseased heart valve.



Zhao Qi Xia a cardiac patient at Royal Columbian Hospital where he underwent open-heart surgery for a valve replacement, relaxing with his wife, Yulu Yang.

# Cardiac care with a heart

## Care at Royal Columbian Hospital puts patients first

By: Vicky Fawkes

When Zhao Qi Xia and his wife Yulu Yang left their home country of China to join their daughter's family in Canada, they couldn't have been more excited to begin their new lives. The Xia family never would have expected that just two months after their arrival, Zhao would be admitted to Royal Columbian Hospital's (RCH) Emergency Department for a life-threatening heart condition.

Suffering from a severely high fever and nearly comatose, Zhao was immediately given an electrocardiogram (ECG) test to check his heart, which determined that a bacterial infection was destroying his heart valve. When the penicillin treatment he was given proved to be unsuccessful in combating the infection, Zhao had no other choice but to undergo open-heart surgery for a heart valve replacement.

"You can imagine how worried we were," recalls Summer Yitian, Zhao's daughter. "My father had just arrived in Canada, speaking very little English, and he had no previous heart condition."

The Xia family's fears were quickly put to rest as a result of the excellent care and compas-

sion Zhao received from the RCH medical teams. "Every single person in the hospital treated my Dad like a family member," says Summer. Zhao himself was tremendously pleased with the care he received during his time at Royal Columbian Hospital, as well as the compassionate staff that attended to him. "They have hearts of gold, so loving and I was deeply moved by them. Apart from being good at what they do, the whole team is wonderful. Everyone is so patient. They are knowledgeable and love what they do," said Zhao.

The Xia family's story has a happy ending. Dr. Shahzad Karim, Chief of Cardiac Surgery at Royal Columbian Hospital, notes that the hospital and its cardiac care unit have always strived to be a welcoming and diverse setting for patients of all backgrounds. "We have a fairly large program here for cardiac surgery, and because of the fact that we are located in an area where there is a large Asian population, we're often faced with people who don't speak the language," says Dr. Karim. "Our team is well aware of the vast diversity of backgrounds in Fraser Health, particularly the Asian populations in Burnaby, as well as Surrey. We acknowledge that, and we are very

sensitive to those people who are coming in with their first heart attack, those who are scared and don't know what they will face," he adds.

While Dr. Karim stresses the importance of keeping the hospital's cardiac trauma patients informed, it is even more important for Canadians to know the risks of heart disease in order to avoid it. In Canada, about 80,000 people die annually from cardiovascular diseases, which include heart attacks, strokes, vascular disease and high blood pressure, a statistic that holds true even when the sufferer appears to be at a healthy weight. Even more concerning is the fact that every seven minutes, a Canadian dies from a heart attack, making heart disease the second leading cause of death in Canada.

Dr. Albert Chan, Director, Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories and Interventional Cardiol-

ogy, RCH is no stranger to the cardiac issues that British Columbia's Asian community faces. Dr. Chan, who is one of five physicians involved in Royal Columbian Hospital's interventional program, notes that the hospital's interventional cardiology unit is the only program of its kind in Fraser Health, receiving referrals from the other 12 hospitals in the authority.

Dr. Chan takes pride in the hospital's excellent medical services. "The staff at RCH is really just so great. Every member of the team is very experienced in their field and highly trained in what they do. Many of them have years of experience in cardiac care and many are critical care trained. We are just so fortunate to work with such a wonderful team," says Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan notes that the outstanding kindness and comfort the staff provides at Royal Columbian Hos-

pital can be summed up in one sentence. "Many patients come in not knowing what to expect and what they will face, but in the end, all of them leave feeling comfortable and appreciative of the wonderful care they have received."

For further information or to donate to the Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation please visit [rchcares.com](http://rchcares.com) or call 604 520 4438

### Centre of excellence

Royal Columbian Hospital is a Fraser Health provincial centre and regional referral hospital providing specialized care for trauma, cardiac services, neurosciences, mental health and sub-

stance abuse, high risk maternity and neonatal intensive care for 1.6 million seriously ill and injured people from across the province. RCH is also a UBC teaching hospital with a Clinical Academic Campus.

### Raising Funds

Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation (RCHF) is a provincial and regional independent charitable foundation that raises millions of dollars annually to help fund priority equipment needs, facility enhancements, research, education and innovation at RCH. For more information about Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation, visit [rchcares.com](http://rchcares.com) or contact us on 604 520 4438.

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