

TO ALL OPEN HEART SURGERY PATIENTS SINCE  
NOVEMBER 2011

Montreal, October 31, 2016

Patient name

Address

City, Province Postal Code

In 2015, the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), along with many hospitals in North America, was informed of the risk of bacterial contamination in devices (heater-cooler devices) used during open heart surgeries that require extracorporeal circulation. As a result, the MUHC implemented stringent measures, set by the suppliers of the equipment, to reduce the risk of infection. In October 2016, the MUHC was informed that two patients from the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) were infected.

Although no MUHC patient has developed an infection and the risk of infection is minimal (less than 1%), our records indicate that you have undergone surgery in which this type of device was used, and we feel the need to inform you about the situation.

The manufacturer has confirmed that their devices were contaminated by the *Mycobacterium chimaera* bacteria during production at the factory in Germany. This is a type of bacteria that is commonly found in nature and rarely causes disease in healthy people. However, people who have been exposed to the bacteria during open heart surgery may develop symptoms up to five years after surgery.

Infection with *Mycobacterium chimaera* is not contagious, but can be serious. It must be diagnosed by a clinical investigation, including laboratory tests (microbiology), at the onset of symptoms. An antibiotic treatment is available, if needed. Preventive screening in the absence of symptoms is not useful since the bacteria cannot be detected.

**We recommend that you stay vigilant and contact your doctor if you experience the following symptoms for more than two weeks:**

- Fever, night sweats
- Persistently draining wound
- Muscle and joint pain and fatigue
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Unexplained weight loss

For more information, we have posted Questions and Answers available at [www.muhc.ca](http://www.muhc.ca). Should you have further questions, the MUHC has set up a toll-free call centre, which you can reach by dialing **1-888-996-9088**. **Please leave a message with your name, telephone number and hospital card number.** An MUHC professional will call you back as soon as possible.

We also advise to bring a copy of this letter to your family physician at a future follow-up.

The MUHC takes the well-being and safety of our patients very seriously. It is for the sole purpose of monitoring your medical condition as adequately as possible that we wanted to contact you. Please be assured that we understand the concerns that this news can bring, and we are at your disposal to offer you all the support you need.

Renzo Cecere, MD  
Chief, Heart Surgery

Ewa Sidorowicz, MD  
Director of Professional Services