



## Media Release

March 8, 2017

### A New Social Media Platform for Victoria General Hospital's Pediatric Patients

*Helping kids in hospital find information, connections and support through Upopolis*

**Victoria, B.C.** – Victoria General Hospital has become the first hospital on Vancouver Island to join [Upopolis](#); an innovative social support platform and networking tool giving young patients safe and secure access to kid-friendly medical content. Plus patients will find Upopolis a vital link to their families, friends and schools while in hospital.

“We are pleased to support initiatives that help young patients feel empowered while in our care,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “Not only is Upopolis an age-appropriate learning tool that brings children who face similar challenges together on their health-care journeys; it also helps kids be kids through familiar social media channels.”

Founded and created by [Kids' Health Links Foundation](#) (KHLF) and [powered by TELUS Health](#), Upopolis.com is Canada's only private, secure and trusted online social network designed for kids and teens receiving medical care in hospitals and clinics.

“Through the overwhelming support of TELUS as our technology partner, as well as our many individual and corporate supporters, today more than 2,000 youth across Canada have been able to take advantage of Upopolis,” said Basile Papaevangelou, chairman and founder of Kids' Health Links Foundation. “Having Victoria General Hospital join our Upopolis family puts us one step closer to our goal of making Upopolis available across the country in every medical treatment facility that serves children and teens, and we are forging ahead towards making that a reality.”

Upopolis differs from typical social networks by delivering therapeutic benefits for the youth who use it. These benefits include being able to access medical content written in kid-friendly language so patients can better understand their diagnosis and treatment plan; and enabling connections with other patients who share similar diagnoses through public and private discussion groups, which can lead to new friendships, shared experiences and new interests that form a broader support network for the patient.

“The Victoria General Hospital serves a diverse patient population from across Vancouver Island,” said Dr. Brendan Carr, President and CEO of Island Health. “Upopolis can provide online social support for our patients and help them connect with others in a safe way, stay connected to their communities, and relate to other children and youth on a similar health care journey.”

In addition to remaining secure and privately connected with networks outside of the hospital or treatment centre while undergoing care, Upopolis also provides patients with familiar features of social networking such as personal profiles, a newsfeed, instant chat, photo uploading and creating spaces based on common interests and/or diagnoses.

“For youth undergoing medical treatment, research shows us that the ability for them to stay connected with their support network, both inside and outside of the hospital, is a significant part of the healing process,” said Paul Lepage, President, TELUS Health. “Through Upopolis and our extensive work using innovative technology to drive better health outcomes for Canadians, we are privileged to help youth to stay connected to friends, family and others facing similar health challenges, as well as learn more about their health through access to online information in a safe and secure environment.”

KHLF and TELUS Health launched the first Upopolis program in 2007 at McMaster Children’s Hospital in Hamilton, Ontario. Since then it has expanded to 23 hospitals and health organizations across Canada. The Upopolis team and TELUS Health also work together to adapt the program to meet the specific needs of each facility, whether adding French language capabilities or information specific to mental health.

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### **About Island Health**

Island Health, one of six health jurisdictions in British Columbia, provides health care and support services to more than 765,000 people on Vancouver Island, the islands in the Salish Sea and the Johnstone Strait, and mainland communities north of Powell River.

With more than 19,000 staff, 1,900 physician partners, 6,000 volunteers, and the dedicated support of foundations and auxiliaries, Island Health delivers a broad range of health services, including: public health services, primary health care, home and community care, mental health and addictions services, acute care in hospitals, and much more across a huge, geographically diverse region.

### **About TELUS Health**

TELUS Health is a leader in telehomecare, electronic medical and health records, consumer health, benefits management and pharmacy management. TELUS Health solutions give health authorities, providers, physicians, patients and consumers the power to turn information into better health outcomes. For more information about TELUS Health, please visit [telushealth.com](http://telushealth.com).

### **About the Kids’ Health Links Foundation**

The Kids’ Health Links Foundation was founded by Basile Papaevangelou and his daughter Christina to foster initiatives focused on alleviating the stress, isolation and loneliness for kids and teens undergoing medical care so that they might be better able to overcome traumatic medical experiences. These initiatives include: Upopolis -- targeting healthy connections for paediatric patients; Upedia -- providing resources supporting child life specialists; and UMIND -- connecting professionals dedicated to child and youth mental health. For more information about the Kids’ Health Links Foundation please visit: [kidshealthlinks.org](http://kidshealthlinks.org).

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