

Laptop surgery aid goes worldwide

Countries include Rwanda, China

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Staff Reporter

A sophisticated system that allows renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Ivar Mendez to guide surgeons in remote locations through an operation using a laptop computer will be placed in Rwanda, China, Bolivia and Cuba.

"Rwanda is a country that has about 10 million people. They only have three neurosurgeons for 10 million people," Mendez told reporters during a demonstration at the Halifax Infirmary on Friday.

Nova Scotia has nine neurosurgeons for 900,000 people.

Mendez said it is hoped the technology will be in place in Rwanda by the fall.

"One of the issues is we need, obviously, to train new neurosurgeons. We need to train their neurosurgeons, and this system will allow us to do that.

"The bottom line is that we can reach anywhere in the world from Halifax."

During Friday's demonstration,

with the click of a computer mouse, Mendez watched two surgeries in progress inside operating rooms in Halifax and Saint John, N.B., from the comfort of a small room inside the infirmary.

"It has to do with teaching new procedures, mentoring, and also guiding and also sharing expertise," Mendez said.

The remote surgeons could see Mendez and cameras allowed him to see inside their operating rooms.

"The system is so amazingly sophisticated that the detail of the surgical procedure is so precise that you can actually see what is happening," Mendez said.

He has been using versions of the technology in Nova Scotia since 2007.

It was pioneered in Canada by Mendez and other doctors at the Brain Repair Centre, operated by Dalhousie University's medical school, the Capital district health authority and the IWK Health Centre in Halifax.

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Dr. Ivar Mendez mentors a neurosurgical procedure remotely, using the remote presence RP-Vantage unit