

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ST. BONIFACE HOSPITAL NICU LAUNCHES VIDEO DIARIES APP JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

*System will keep families connected with babies thanks to donor funding*

**WINNIPEG – December 21, 2021** – About 20 babies will spend their first Christmas in St. Boniface Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Today, the Hospital launched a secure video messaging app to keep parents connected to their little ones when they can't be at the hospital, made possible thanks to funding from St. Boniface Hospital Foundation.

In Canada, 1 in every 12 babies are born prematurely and more than 1 in 10 are treated in NICUs each year. For parents of premature and sick babies who have been unable to spend time together as a family due to visiting restrictions and infection fears, the coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated an already distressing situation.

Neonatal teams at St. Boniface Hospital, who care for [over 600 sick or premature babies each year](#), identified the increased challenges faced by families they support and started exploring how technology could help reduce parents' separation anxiety over the festive period and beyond.

vCreate Diaries is a secure photo and video app which allows nursing teams to record and share visual updates of the babies with their families – keeping them connected so they never miss a precious milestone. St. Boniface Hospital launched the app today. The Hospital is leading the way in using this technology to bring comfort to families of babies in hospital. St. Boniface will be the first Hospital in Western Canada to use this video diaries system, which has been used widely in the UK.

A recent [multi-centre evaluation](#) highlighted how the video service reduces parents' separation anxiety, improves their involvement in their child's care, and supports positive relationships with their clinical care team.

The app will make an immediate difference for families in the NICU. Cory and Kelly Burtnyk welcomed their first child, Annie, at St. Boniface Hospital 12 weeks early on December 13 of this year. It was tough on them to be discharged and sent home without Annie, but knowing they'll be able to stay connected via the vCreate platform when they can't be in the NICU, especially as they plan for their first Christmas, will make the experience a little bit easier on the new family.

Karen Fowler, President and CEO of St. Boniface Hospital Foundation said:

*We're delighted to support such a fantastic project which will have a positive, lasting impact on the parents and families of some of the youngest and most vulnerable patients at St. Boniface Hospital. The vCreate Diaries will connect new and growing families, making sure they don't miss out on any special moments. Technology like this is so important, now more than ever as*



*Manitobans continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. We're so grateful to of the donors whose generous support makes projects like the vCreate Diaries possible. Through their gifts, they have been a lifeline for sick children and their families.*

Stacey Ross, Program Team Manager for the NICU at St. Boniface Hospital said:

*Parents are the most important people in a baby's life. In St. Boniface's NICU, we take care of the whole family, not just the baby. VCreate can offer reassurance and support to help alleviate some of the fears and anxieties separation brings. Especially during this pandemic context, enabling parents to see their baby in videos and pictures helps us as clinicians to provide more meaningful updates and share their baby's journey more effectively during these most stressful times. I cannot thank St. Boniface Hospital Foundation enough for making it possible to bring this app to our NICU families.*

Funded by St. Boniface Hospital Foundation, which supports the life-saving patient care and research at St. Boniface Hospital, clinical teams are excited to begin capturing and sharing special moments of little ones with their families.

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**About St. Boniface Hospital Foundation**

*St. Boniface Hospital Foundation was founded in 1971 and is the primary fundraising organization for St. Boniface Hospital. The Foundation is dedicated to making possible the many innovations in health research and patient care taking place at the Hospital. St. Boniface Hospital is a leader in patient care excellence, delivered with genuine compassion. Research at St. Boniface Hospital is where medical discoveries are made; science is translated into practices that improve human health; and today's best minds are shaping tomorrow's advances in health care. For more information, visit [www.stbhf.ca](http://www.stbhf.ca).*