



Improving the Patient Journey



who we are

The Alberta Cardiac Access Collaborative is a joint initiative of Alberta's health system to improve access to adult cardiac services throughout the patient journey by implementing best practices in waiting time management as measured by the Canadian Cardiovascular Society benchmarks, the Alberta quality matrix and other evidence-based guidelines.

The Collaborative has received \$11.8 million in funding from Alberta Health and Wellness as part of the Alberta Wait Times Initiative through to 2009.

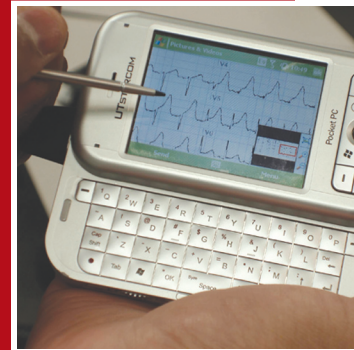
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The Alberta Cardiac Access Collaborative is a joint initiative of Alberta's health system to improve access to adult cardiac services throughout the patient journey.

the work of the collaborative

Alberta's Cardiac Access Collaborative is creating new care delivery models and commitment among health centres, emergency medical providers, nurses, primary care doctors, hospitals, cardiac specialists and clinicians. These connections are bridging jurisdictions and geography with one aim – improving the patient journey for adults needing cardiac care.



The Collaborative is leading four initiatives

Heart Attack – improving access to urgent care for people experiencing a heart attack so that heart muscle damage is minimized

Heart Failure – improving access to care for patients with chronic heart failure who need ongoing support, treatment, education and self management strategies

Patient Navigation – streamlining referral processes by providing single points of entry into the cardiac system and utilizing nurse navigators

Arrhythmia – improving the referral process and increasing clinical capacity so that patients needing cardiac device implants and other arrhythmia services get the right service at the right time

Heart Attack Initiative

If a person having a heart attack receives treatment within the first hour, one in four patients end up with little or no heart damage.

The Heart Attack Initiative is addressing time to treatment and quality follow-up through:

- A systematic and integrated approach to treating heart attacks
- Expanding the reach of early reperfusion programs to allow non-tertiary care centres and pre-hospital providers to send ECGs via phone and fax to specialists who can provide a diagnosis over the phone

For patients, this can mean treatment before they reach a care centre, earlier treatment in smaller treatment centres and quicker transfers to the treatment centre best able to meet their needs.

The Initiative is an outgrowth of the Vital Heart Response program in Edmonton and Calgary's STEMI (Strategic Evaluation and Assessment of Acute Myocardial Infarction) program. Both are designed around research showing higher success rates when acute care nurses, paramedics, emergency physicians, internists and cardiologists work cooperatively.

Heart Failure Initiative

Heart failure clinics – or heart function clinics as they're sometimes known – provide patients and families with the tools and knowledge they need in order to live well with heart failure, including:

- Complete medical evaluation
- Ongoing education and connections to community resources
- Assistance with managing medication and medical care
- Advice about diet, lifestyle, self monitoring and self management
- Ongoing support through follow-up visits and telephone monitoring

Prior to the Initiative, heart failure clinics were offered in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Lethbridge and many patients traveled long distances to receive these comprehensive services.

The Heart Failure Initiative is adding new capacity and expanding the reach of existing resources. Ties with primary care networks and family physicians are being strengthened to support a patient's connection with their regular source of care.

Participating regions across Alberta are setting up or expanding heart failure services either by:

- Starting a new clinic
- Increasing capacity at an existing clinic
- Holding training sessions to increase clinician awareness

Patient Navigation

The overall goal of the Collaborative's Patient Navigation Initiative is to remove barriers and improve access to timely treatment and care for patients with acute coronary syndromes, heart failure and those requiring cardiac device implantations.

This is being done by:

- Coordinating access to care
- Triageing patients according to urgency
- Standardizing referral processes
- Facilitating the transition of patients between caregivers and service areas

Across the province, Patient Navigation solutions are being developed that range from establishing a dedicated clinic to using navigation resources to assist existing programs.

Dedicated central access lines have been set up in the north and south.

Nurse navigators answer the line and assist with the referral, supported by physicians.



Heart Arrhythmia

Arrhythmias are disorders affecting the rhythmic beating of the heart. They can occur in a healthy heart and not be serious. They can also be a sign of a serious problem. Diagnosis and treatment is important and can prevent heart disease, stroke or sudden cardiac death.

This initiative aims to increase patient access to arrhythmia services by:

- Increasing capacity through opening new clinics in Calgary and Edmonton
- Providing timely access to cardiac devices through the use of care pathways, thus reducing the number of inappropriate referrals
- Triageing patients for general consultation, leading to reduced time for assessment and investigation leading to more timely initiation of therapy

Edmonton and Calgary provide Arrhythmia services for Albertans and also to parts of our neighboring provinces.



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