

News Release

September 25, 2007

Health Quality Council of Alberta announces findings and recommendations related to its review of emergency and urgent care services in the Calgary Health Region

(Calgary, AB) -- The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) today released its findings and recommendations from a comprehensive review of emergency and urgent care services in the Calgary Health Region (CHR). The review was undertaken at the request of the CHR under section 14 of the *Health Quality Council of Alberta Regulation*, which states that the Council may assess, inquire into or study matters respecting patient safety and the quality of patient care that are referred to it at the request of a health authority.

The HQCA's 11 recommendations focus on two levels: organizational performance affecting emergency and urgent care services, including improved strategic planning, leadership, measurement and workforce engagement; and department and service-level performance.

In releasing the recommendations, Dr. John Cowell, chief executive officer of the Council, said he believes the report gives the CHR new ideas and opportunities to explore that have significant potential to improve the quality of emergency and urgent care services for citizens.

"One of our key recommendations is for the Region to develop a service strategy that specifically focuses on emergency and urgent care rather than being contained within acute and sub-acute care. There's no doubt that compared to a decade ago, changes in the scope of care, technology and service delivery now put emergency and urgent care on equal footing with strategic areas such as inpatient care and community care. The CHR has an opportunity to become a leader in the area of emergency and urgent care by addressing this new strategic reality.

"We are very pleased that the CHR approached the Council to conduct this important independent quality review," continues Cowell. "We know the Region is dealing with challenges such as rapid population growth that have had significant impact on all service areas. However, throughout the course of our review, we found everyone from executive, management, staff and physicians responsive and open to change."

"This review affirms that the Calgary Health Region is already performing at a high level compared to other health systems in the delivery of health care services," says Jack Davis, the Region's chief executive officer. "Even more importantly, it identifies specific areas that can be improved upon and provides the impetus to explore truly innovative practices and processes, which will take us well beyond what is currently viewed as best practices for emergency and urgent care services in this country.



“The Region wishes to thank Dr. Cowell and his staff for their work on this review and the manner in which it was conducted,” says Davis. “This review will help the Region as we move forward in advancing emergency and urgent care services in our increasingly complex health care system. We take this report very seriously and all of the recommendations will be closely examined by our executive management team.”

The HQCA’s recommendations were developed following a thorough and interactive review of CHR processes and practices as well as an examination of leading national and international emergency and urgent care practices. The patient perspective was captured by extracting findings from a larger provincewide survey of emergency departments and urgent care centres that the HQCA conducted in early 2007. The full findings from that survey will be publicly released later in the year. A group of expert advisors reviewed the report and provided additional feedback.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta has experience investigating quality and safety concerns. Most recently it identified issues and made recommendations related to infection prevention and control and central sterilization room issues in East Central Health. In the past it has also reviewed medication safety issues for the Alberta Cancer Board, Calgary Health Region and David Thompson Health Region.

The report is available at www.hqca.ca or www.calgaryhealthregion.ca

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