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NEWS RELEASE

New Health Quality Council of Alberta ground-breaking online tool provides insight on patients' emergency department experiences

(Edmonton, AB) The Health Quality Council of Alberta has launched a new interactive online tool, [FOCUS on Emergency Departments](#), which provides an unprecedented amount of information from the last five years about the 16 busiest emergency departments in Alberta.

"We believe in the power of information - that Albertans benefit when they have access to information about their healthcare system," says Andrew Neuner, HQCA CEO. "Transparency is important to a publicly funded healthcare system. It fosters trust and confidence among the public. Knowledge can start conversations, and when necessary, lead to improvements."

Available via a new website, Albertans, emergency department providers, healthcare administrators, and patients alike, can use this new online tool to look at 18 measures and learn more about what is happening at each of the 16 busiest emergency departments in Alberta over a five-year period, and compare findings to similar types of emergency departments in the province.

The tool will stimulate conversations about healthcare quality, encourage quality improvement efforts in Alberta, and allow users to track progress over time. Evidence indicates that when quality measures are publicly reported, the results of the measures improve over time. FOCUS – Fostering Open Conversations that Unleash Solutions – is a larger initiative for the HQCA that starts with emergency department care and will expand to other areas of healthcare delivery and present information in a similar way.

Emergency departments are the first area in the HQCA's FOCUS tool because they are often seen as the "canary in the coal mine" and can be a barometer for what's happening in the broader healthcare system. What's happening in the hospital, or even continuing care, can impact patients' experiences in the emergency department.

Albertans can see things like how long patients wait in Medicine Hat to see an emergency doctor to how patients in Fort McMurray have rated their overall experience with communication from emergency staff.

Unlike any other resource available in Canada, this innovative tool offers comprehensive, easy-to-use, interactive charts supported by descriptive narrative to help start conversations about the information being presented. Timely and publically available, the information will be updated quarterly.

"Healthcare is important to all Albertans; timely, relevant information can start the conversations that need to happen to make our healthcare system the best it can be," says Dr. Brian Holroyd, Professor and Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta.

The HQCA took a collaborative approach in designing the website and worked with emergency department stakeholders and Albertans to ensure the measures would be easy to understand, and helpful for quality improvement.

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“This new approach to reporting and transparency of information will help us improve emergency care in Alberta,” says Dr. Holroyd, “The site demonstrates data in a way that is credible, understandable, and relevant. We can use it to make positive improvements, to identify and share best practices, and to celebrate where we are doing well.”

The measures presented include two types of information:

- Results of an HQCA patient experience survey conducted with people who have recently visited an emergency department
- Emergency department and hospital data provided by Alberta Health Services

The combination of these types of information provide a picture of what patients in Alberta have experienced when visiting the 16 emergency departments.

“Albertans can trust that when they go to any emergency department in Alberta, they will get the care they need,” says Neuner. “What this tool offers is the ability for all users to identify trends at the emergency departments where they live or work. They can look for differences between sites and over time. This information can start conversations and lead to solutions for improved quality of care.

“It’s important not to look at any of the 18 measures in isolation - an emergency department could show consistently poorer results than a comparable emergency department on one measure, yet in another measure consistently exceed other sites. Longer wait times to see an emergency doctor, for example, does not always mean patients’ overall care experience is below average. If patients report that staff always introduced themselves, it often results in a higher overall patient-reported care experience,” Neuner adds.

“The website is a starting point to help people understand what’s happening in our healthcare system,” says GERALYN L’HEUREUX, chair of the HQCA’s Patient/Family Safety Advisory Panel. “From my perspective, it is a level of transparency patients haven’t had access to before in this level of detail, and I’m excited about spending time looking through the information. I will be able to see how my past experiences with emergency care compare with what other patients in Alberta have experienced.”

The 16 emergency departments selected are historically characterised as having the highest-volume. They include:

Large Urban – Trauma

Foothills Medical Centre, Calgary
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Edmonton
University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton

Large Urban

Grey Nuns Community Hospital, Edmonton
Misericordia Community Hospital, Edmonton
Peter Lougheed Centre, Calgary
Rockyview General Hospital, Calgary
South Health Campus, Calgary

Medium Urban

Chinook Regional Hospital, Lethbridge
Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, Medicine Hat
Northern Lights Regional Health Centre, Fort McMurray
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Grande Prairie
Red Deer Regional Hospital, Red Deer
Sturgeon Community Hospital, St. Albert

Children’s

Alberta Children’s Hospital, Calgary
Stollery Children’s Hospital, Edmonton

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The Health Quality Council of Alberta is a provincial agency that pursues opportunities to improve patient safety and health service quality for Albertans. The HQCA's legislative mandate is to measure, monitor, and assess health service quality.

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