



News Release

June 29, 2011


Health Quality Council of Alberta releases update on the independent review of the quality of care and safety of patients requiring access to emergency department care and cancer surgery and the role and process of physician advocacy

(Calgary, AB)...The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) is providing its first update for this review. "Given the scope of the review and to ensure the highest possible attention would be given to it, one of the HQCA's first actions was to divide the review into two parts," said Dr. John Cowell, chief executive officer of the HQCA. "In the first part, we want to understand whether the events that led to the waitlist issues related to lung surgery in 2001, including patients that died while on that waitlist many of whom had cancer, have been mitigated to ensure they don't happen again. We are also doing an analysis of the more than 300 cases identified in 2008 regarding access to emergency department services again to determine whether the issues associated with those cases have been mitigated to ensure they don't happen again." The second part of the review is looking specifically at the role and process of physician advocacy. Both parts of the review are being conducted by the Quality Assurance Committee of the HQCA under section 9 of the *Alberta Evidence Act*.

The purpose of the review is to make recommendations to improve system performance. Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Gene Zwozdesky requested the review in March 2011 under section 13 of the *Health Quality Council of Alberta Regulation*.

Milestones to date:

- The HQCA has established the plan for conducting the review and has appointed the quality assurance teams that will be conducting it. The complex nature of the review has proved challenging and the timeline for completing the report has shifted slightly. The next progress report will be issued in late autumn 2011 with a final report expected early in 2012.
- Medical and ethical advisors have been put in place to provide expertise as needed throughout the review process.
- An Advisory Panel announced on March 23, 2011 has met on several occasions to provide additional advice and counsel.
- The HQCA has obtained commitments of support and cooperation from Alberta Health Services, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association.
- The HQCA has obtained assurances from Alberta Health Services and the faculties of medicine at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary that physicians who participate in the review process will not experience repercussions.

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- Interviews with stakeholders are underway. The names of those interviewed as well as the information they provide are confidential and will not be revealed by the HQCA. Interviewees may choose to disclose that they have been interviewed as part of the review process.
 - Analysis has begun on data related to the emergency department component of the review.
 - A provincewide survey is being developed to gain an understanding of physicians' knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences advocating for patients. The survey will be conducted in September 2011.
 - Efforts continue to validate the presence of a waitlist for lung surgery in 2001, including patients that died while on that waitlist many of whom had cancer.

While significant work has already been completed, Dr. Cowell says there is still a great deal of work ahead. "As we continue to move forward, our goal is not to lay blame on any one individual or organization but to look at system-wide issues and opportunities for improvement as a result of the review findings."

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The HQCA gathers and analyzes information and collaborates with Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Health Services, health professions, academia and other stakeholders to translate that knowledge into practical improvements to health service quality and patient safety in the health care system. The HQCA is a corporation created in 2006 by the Health Quality Council of Alberta Regulation under the Regional Health Authorities Act.

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