

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

May 4, 2022

Announcing the 2022 HQCA Patient Experience Award recipients

(Calgary, AB) Today, the Health Quality Council of Alberta honours healthcare organizations and professionals for improving the patient and family experience during another changing and challenging year in healthcare.

“The pandemic has continued to place extraordinary pressures on service providers, yet many have shown a commitment to continually improving patient and family experiences,” notes Sue Peters, Chair of the HQCA’s Patient and Family Advisory Committee and a member of the final selection panel.

The Patient Experience Awards were established by the HQCA and its Patient and Family Advisory Committee to recognize and spread knowledge about initiatives that improve the patient’s overall experience. Since 2015 up to four initiatives have been recognized annually.

“Each of these initiatives we’re recognizing can serve as an example for others, and shows positive patient and family experiences can be achieved by improving the physical environment, how relationships are established and maintained, or how services are planned or delivered,” Peters adds.

“Congratulations to all the healthcare workers, professionals, and scientists who continued to work hard this year through very challenging circumstances, always keeping patients at the centre of all they do,” says Jason Copping, Minister of Health. “Patient Experience Awards like this one are an important reminder for all of us in the healthcare system: to make sure we provide the highest quality of care based on the needs of patients and families.”

This year’s recipients are:

- Integration of radiology, surgery, and pathology in the operating room that reduces the frequency of repeat surgery for early breast cancer.
- A program that provides a ‘home hospital’ model of care to patients with complex conditions.
- A virtual assessment program to provide at-home, early diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- A low-stimulus vaccination clinic for neurodiverse populations.

“Once again we see teams listening to patients and families, taking action to improve, and empowering patients and families to guide their own care,” says Charlene McBrien-Morrison, Chief Executive Officer of the HQCA. “This is at the heart of person-centred care. These awards bring awareness to great work being done across Alberta to improve the patient experience, and show how the patient and family voice can make the healthcare system better.”

Full descriptions of the recipients are provided below. Each initiative receives a plaque, a small education grant, and a video to share additional learnings about their programs. Videos will be produced and shared later this year. Details about the program and previous years’ award recipients can be found at www.hqca.ca/awards.

2022 Patient Experience Award recipients

Breast Cancer Pathology, Cross Cancer Institute, Edmonton

Improved integration of radiology, surgery, and pathology for early breast cancer patients is reducing the frequency of repeat surgery. Radiologists detecting tiny cancers will target the location for surgery. Previously, pathologists would determine successful removal of those targets and cancer days later, and if anything was missed, a repeat operation might become necessary. Now, pathologists in the operating room create X-ray images of the tissue being removed in real time to support the surgeon, and enable precise cancer location and removal in one step. The initiative is improving surgery outcomes for patients, and reducing the overall number of surgeries performed.

Complex Care Hub – Calgary area, Rockyview General Hospital and South Health Campus

The Complex Care Hub provides a Home Hospital care model as an alternative to traditional hospitalization for patients with complex conditions who require hospital-level care but are able to sleep at home. Hospital-based doctors and nurse navigators together oversee the care plan, coordinate services, and connect with primary care. Daily visits occur either in patients’ homes by community paramedics who consult with the doctors, or through virtual doctor appointments. The program aims to envelope patients with the medical care and services they need to heal from their acute illness and empower them to manage their chronic conditions, regain their function and independence, and reduce their risk of readmission.

Infant Preschool Assessment Service (IPAS), Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Edmonton

The IPAS team sought to improve access to early diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, made more difficult during the COVID pandemic. In place of the traditional in-person assessments at the hospital, the IPAS team redesigned intake and assessment processes, partnered with community service providers, and created a now internationally recognized virtual diagnostic tool. This flexible approach increased access, enhanced family involvement, and provided a more complete and realistic assessment of children by observing them in their homes. For rural and remote communities in particular, it has removed the stress and financial strain associated with travel from their communities.

Low-Stimulus Immunization Clinic – Calgary area

This temporary clinic was created in March 2021 to support neurologically diverse clients in accessing COVID immunizations. Clients expressed the need for a quieter, calmer environment to aid in them being immunized. Clients included those with severe needle phobias, PTSD, autism, and a variety of other neurodiversities. The staff worked with the client's family or guardian to design a care plan and gather information before the appointment. This planning helped to adapt the appointment to the individual's needs and reduce the time needed in the clinic. The clinic was located in a central location and had good accessibility in a quieter setting. This clinic has provided over 1,000 doses of COVID vaccine.

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About the HQCA

The Health Quality Council of Alberta is a provincial agency that brings together patients, families, and our partners from across healthcare and academia to inspire improvement in patient safety, person-centred care, and health service quality. We assess and study the healthcare system, identify effective practices, and engage with Albertans to gather information about their experiences. Our responsibilities are outlined in the *Health Quality Council of Alberta Act*.