

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

June 27, 2023

2023 Patient Experience Award recipients support Albertans through different life stages and health challenges

(Calgary, AB) Today, the Health Quality Council of Alberta honours healthcare organizations and professionals for improving the patient and family experience across a range of services – from neonatal intensive care through enhancing quality of life for people with incurable cancer.

“This year’s recipients are an exceptional group of providers who 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. “Whether it’s caring for preterm infants or children with feeding disorders, assisting Indigenous Peoples in navigating complex health systems, or improving support to people with advanced cancer, these programs are inspirational.”

The Patient Experience Awards program was established by the HQCA and its Patient and Family Advisory Committee in 2015 to recognize and spread knowledge about initiatives that improve the patient’s overall experience in accessing or receiving healthcare services.

“Particularly when you consider the pressures on the healthcare system, each of these initiatives deserves to be celebrated as examples for others,” adds Charlene McBrien-Morrison, Chief Executive Officer of the HQCA. “By listening to and empowering patients and families, and taking action to improve, they model the kind of person-centred care we promote,” she says. “We are proud to recognize them.”

Each of the four award recipients receives a small education grant, a plaque, and a video that tells their story. 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.

2023 Patient Experience Award Recipients

Advanced Cancer Support in Virtual Rehabilitation and Exercise (ACTIVE-North)

[ACTIVE-North](#) is an eight-week interdisciplinary program offering individualized support to northern Albertans with incurable cancer. Because of complex symptoms, limited mobility, and long geographic distances, incurable cancer patients who live in remote and rural areas have limited access to on-site specialized services at tertiary centres. Delivered to people in their

homes via Zoom, ACTIVE-North includes one-to-one support from a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, and exercise physiologist; weekly one-to-one meetings with a pain and symptom physician; and weekly supervised exercise sessions including one-to-one and self-directed options. Caregivers say the program significantly improves their loved one's quality of life and their remaining time together as a family.

Family Integrated Care

Family integrated care increases the support and participation of parents in the care of their preterm babies. Implemented in neonatal intensive care units across Alberta, this model of care has improved the experience of parents in feeling informed and included in their baby's care. Co-developed with parents, healthcare professionals, and researchers, [Alberta Family Integrated Care](#) integrates parents into their baby's care team when they are ready and willing. With practical tools and strategies, neonatal care providers educate and support parents as they gain skills and confidence in the care of their baby. The model of care has reduced maternal stress and anxiety and increased parenting confidence. Preterm babies are discharged home an average of 2.5 days sooner, without increasing emergency department visits or readmissions.

Indigenous Support Line

This toll-free, confidential phone service is the first of its kind in Canada to connect Indigenous callers and service providers with Indigenous health professionals. The support line helps First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples navigate the healthcare system, connects them with health resources and cultural supports, and offers immediate support for addiction and mental health concerns. No call is ever turned away, and the Indigenous listener helps guide the caller through each step in the patient's healthcare journey. Help is available to find the right service, even if follow-up or warm "walk along" transfers are required. Development of the [Indigenous Support Line](#) was rooted in the community, involving a mix of Indigenous patients and families with different experiences in the healthcare system, and was an idea put forward by the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Wisdom Council. The line serves the AHS north and south zones.

Pediatric Eating and Swallowing Project (PEAS)

The Pediatric Eating and Swallowing (PEAS) Project (provincewide) was initiated because of a strong desire to improve care for children who have a feeding disorder. An estimated 35 per cent of typically developing children and 80 per cent of developmentally vulnerable children have eating and swallowing difficulties, associated with significant health risks, increased use of medical services, family stress, and expense. From the outset, PEAS focused on listening to and collaborating with families, creating a range of resources including an innovative, [one-stop shop website](#) for families and healthcare providers. Over three years, healthcare quality improved significantly, including fewer emergency visits and hospitalizations, more families receiving a care plan, more timely access to services, and a high satisfaction rating from families.

2023 Distinguished Initiatives

For the first time in this annual program, two additional initiatives are being highlighted for their work to improve the patient and family experience.

Telemonitoring to Reduce Adverse Events for Hospitalized Patients, University of Alberta Hospital

To improve patient safety, telemonitoring was introduced for at-risk patients on high-flow oxygen. Sometimes, patients inadvertently remove their oxygen mask while asleep. If that goes unnoticed, their oxygen saturation level may fall dangerously low. To ensure constant monitoring, portable cameras are set up at the bedside, sending a live video feed to a trained attendant who continuously monitors multiple patients and can notify a nurse when something goes wrong. In one year, telemonitoring detected 162 times in which patients removed their oxygen and 954 instances where a patient's oxygen level fell too low. The number of patient falls declined by 75% and there were fewer transfers to ICU. Patients and caregivers say telemonitoring reduces anxiety and enhances overall patient experience.

Congruence Couples Therapy initiative at Addiction Services Edmonton

Congruence Couples Therapy is an enhancement to existing services within Addiction Services Edmonton that combines addiction and couples counselling to include the client's partner when appropriate. In the traditional approach to addiction treatment, clients and partners were seen separately. Without a coordinated plan for recovery and relapse prevention, couples often grew farther apart. Using this innovative, evidence-based model, couples work together to create a coordinated recovery plan, align expectations, and resolve challenging issues. This relationship-based approach has led to significantly improved symptoms in addiction, as well as better outcomes in mental health, emotion regulation, and reduced life stress, helping couples embark on a joint journey toward sustainable recovery.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Lisa Brake, Senior Director, Communications and Engagement
Health Quality Council of Alberta
403.875.0359
lisa.brake@hqca.ca

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*.