

Providing Local Virtual Access to Emergency Services

Challenge

Emergency departments in Ontario have seen **significant reductions in utilization** since the pandemic began and there are **fewer patients presenting with serious issues** including heart attack and stroke. People who should be seeking care are not, likely due to fear of acquiring COVID-19.

Opportunity

There is an opportunity to **use a virtual approach to support patient-initiated requests for clinical assessment on demand**. Virtual models of care can assist in providing access to assessment, providing self-care advice, and directing patients to the appropriate care setting.

Benefits

- Improves access to care
- Helps patients make best choices for their health needs
- Uses health system resources appropriately
- Provides more convenient care with minimal disruption to the patient/family members



Ontarian seeks medical care and/or advice

Hospital webpage includes ED info plus ability for patient to initiate a virtual visit from their own device.



Virtual Triage Options

Direct contact
Physician assesses all patients virtually (by telephone or video).

Triage model
A nurse virtually triages the patient request to the appropriate level. eCTAS could be used.

Fully automated
A chatbot (or similar)/digital clinical algorithms triage the patient before a clinician is involved.



Virtual Visit Model

The patient is placed in a queue to virtually visit with the next available physician
OR
Is sent a scheduled time for the video or audio call.



Assessment completed with advice provided (e.g. prescription, lab test)

OR

In-person ED visit recommended

Ontario-Based Examples

CHEO CHEO becomes Canada's first pediatric hospital offering a virtual Emergency Department

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RC VTAC Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre

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eCTAS

Electronic Canadian Triage Acuity Scale

Ontario hospitals have implemented the provincial Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) eCTAS tool to capture accurate CTAS scores for patients. It has been shown to improve the consistency and quality of patient care and could be utilized in a **pre-hospital context** including a virtual model of care that promotes access to on-demand services.

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International Examples

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NHS
England

Sutter
Health

Allina
Health

Bryan
Health