



David Thompson Health Advisory Council (DTHAC) Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 05, 2023 / 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. / Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre (RDRHC)

ATTENDEES & INTRODUCTIONS	
Members	Peggy Makofka (Vice Chair), Rosemary Brown, Allyssa Deheer, Bill Elliot, Gerry Greschner, Christine Heggart, Wendi Lautenbach, Judy Lorenz, Martha Winchell and Quinton Wintfley
Alberta Health Services (AHS)	Janice Stewart, Jacquie Hakes and Deanna Dament
Regrets	Pam Hansen (Chair), Ken Hansen, Janey Olson, Darrin Thompson and Robert Yatkowsky
Public	24
Welcome & Introductions	Rosemary Brown welcomed all in attendance, facilitated introductions and provided a land acknowledgment.
Approval of previous minutes	Council approved the April 26, 2023, minutes by consensus.
STANDING ITEMS	
Alberta Health Services Zone Update	<p>Janice Stewart, Chief Zone Officer, Central Zone, shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Alberta asked AHS to restructure the Addiction and Mental Health Department. Thus, Central Zone staff now report to a provincial lead, Kerry Bales, and not the zone lead, Janice Stewart. • The Provincial Winter Bed Plan is adding beds to the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre (RDRHC). The Overcapacity Plan is in place. RDRHC will admit patients to a unit and they will stay in a non-traditional space temporarily until space opens. • Central Zone staff continue to work on reducing emergency department (ED) wait-times, improving Emergency Medical Service's (EMS) response times, increasing access to surgeries and improving patient flow. • A Connect Care home care module will be tested in Red Deer and Calgary in November 2023. • Alberta now licenses a new category of nurses called domestic Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN). Domestic IENs are Canadians who trained abroad. Previously, when they arrived in Canada they could not practice nursing for many years and now they can. AHS trains domestic IENs to be safe and competent. • IENs are starting to arrive in Alberta. The first two to arrive in Alberta started in Ponoka. Over the next 18 months, IEN cohorts will arrive in a series of waves.



<p>AHS Zone Update (Q & A)</p>	<p>In response to questions posed, Janice added the following:</p> <p>AHS uses physician and nurse practitioner (NP) locums. There is no time limit on physician locums, the problem is finding people to stay in a community for longer than two weeks. Janice will inquire why locums cannot write referrals in Coronation. There is a pilot project at Sylvan Lake Advanced Ambulatory Care Centre utilizing NPs. Thus, while it appears they are only offered to some communities, that is not the case. First, the NP locum pool is very small, and NPs require a special designation to work independently. They are not always accepted by AHS physicians. AHS is working on the doctor’s concerns.</p> <p>Regarding, the emergency department (ED) at RDRHC. First, the wait time at RDRHC is calculated as 27 hours, which is the ninetieth percentile and captures all the outliers who wait a long time. The average wait time is approximately eight hours. Next, there is not a policy or plan to isolate immunocompromised patients from the public at the RDRHC in the ED waiting room. Conversely, there is no policy that states immunocompromised patients must stay in the waiting room. Whether immunocompromised patients are isolated from the public is based on the doctor’s clinical judgement. There is a fast-track area for patients with minor complaints and another area at the back of the ED for others who need multidiscipline team care. Thus, there must be space where immunocompromised patients can wait in isolation. Janice will inquire with her medical colleagues.</p>
<p>Action Items</p>	<p>Janice to follow up with Quinton on NP locum referral system in Coronation.</p> <p>Janice to follow up with her medical colleagues about immunocompromised patients in ED waiting rooms.</p>
<p>Council Round Table</p>	<p>Council members shared the following from their communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eckville – In September, a psychologist and a dental hygienist opened new clinics. The Wellness Coalition conducted a survey, and the top needs are medical, financial and community inclusion. The Eckville NP position remains vacant. • Coronation – Coronation is conducting research on NPs. Currently, the town has a full complement of nurses, and a doctor is scheduled to start in early 2024. Still, recruitment and retention of health care workers (HCW) remains difficult. • Red Deer – Pharmacist’s roles expanded in Alberta. A Lending Cupboard is going to open in Camrose. Hip and knee surgeries are on schedule. Due to the long waitlist to see a psychiatrist, patients can opt to see a Primary Care Network (PCN) psychiatrist then follow-up with a family doctor. The waitlist for the PCN psychiatrist is shorter. • Rocky Mountain House (RMH) – Rosemary shared her family members have all been well served by the healthcare system. Christine indicated the RMH hospital build continues, and the foundation is fund raising for hospital equipment. • Sundre – Gerry reported the new hospital sign is up. The Sundre Hospital Legacy Gala is in November, and the foundation is undertaking a two-year capital campaign to fund upgrades in senior’s care and hospital rooms. Recent bariatric room updates were funded by a generous donation from a local family.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rimbey – Family and Community Support Service (FCSS) signed a seven-year contract to provide home care in the area. • Hanna – Rob reported the COVID outbreak in acute care is over and the hospital is now open. • Bentley – Wendi is happy about the work being done to recruit IENs by Central Zone Leadership.
<p>Voices of the Community</p>	<p>The community members from the County of Wetaskiwin discussed:</p> <p>Diminishing Services - Due to a lack of services in the county, a resident who needs physical therapy travels to Daysland and it is difficult on the family. Another hardship is no obstetrics in Drayton Valley, requiring expectant mothers travel to RDRHC to deliver their babies. They can't be sent to Edmonton, which is 45 minutes away, they must go to Red Deer which is 90 minutes away. Subsequently, 22 births have occurred on the highway. As a result, residents fund raise for equipment in the hope it will bring some services back to the community. In Drayton Valley, residents feel the Computed Tomography Scanner (CT scanner) they raised money to buy is underutilized. It is reportedly open limited hours during the day and is closed weekends, statutory holidays and evenings. Many people wait days in the hospital until it reopens. It is disheartening to donors who don't want to give funds anymore because the CT scanner is not used the way they expected.</p> <p>Another service to consider bringing back to smaller communities is walk-in lab services. Residents are advised to talk to their community lab about their concerns because decisions are made by each lab and each town. A patient goes to a lab and often must handover their requisition. However, the lab requisition shouldn't be taken from a patient by the lab staff because one form may be used for many tests. Lastly, due to a lack of access to surgeries and long waitlists, Kathy from the County of Wetaskiwin knows 16 people who went out of province or country to have surgeries.</p> <p>Workforce - Semi-retired and retired staff are a large resource AHS is not using. The union requires a nurse to work 12 hours. If they were allowed to work five hours, retired nurses would make themselves available. Another missed opportunity is internationally educated healthcare workers (HCW). The suggestion is to implement an apprentice program for internationally educated HCWs like those for plumbers and electricians. This will incorporate people faster into the system.</p>
<p>Voices of the Community Questions and Answers (Q & A)</p>	<p>In response to questions from the community, Janice added the following:</p> <p>X-ray/laboratory tech staff are employed by AHS. In Drayton Valley, there is a pilot project using each to expand the hours available for CT scanning. Techs can do head and spine non-contrast CT scans only. The use of x-ray/lab tech staff varies from town to town. In the past, there has been some difficulties with the intake process of the combined staff, but AHS uses them in the North and Central Zones. The volume of people getting trained to be x-ray/lab staff is not keeping up with current needs.</p>



	Many communities report their internationally educated doctors arrive but do not start their assessment immediately. The Alberta Medical Association (AMA) schedules the assessments and AHS asks them to align assessment start and arrival dates.
Rural Health Professional Action Plan (RhPAP)	RhPAP continues to offer online learning sessions called “Knowledge Now,” and career information sessions. More information here . RhPAP recently hired two new staff with the same name, Emily Johnson; one is with grants and the other is in marketing.
Report from the Chair	In Pam’s absence Rosemary welcomed DTHAC’s new member. Also, it was relayed to the Council by Deanna from Pam to celebrate HCWs because they work hard and deserve the appreciation.
Report from Advisory Council Coordinator	Spring Forum 2024 is May 31 and June 1. The October Learning Series is offered in lieu of the cancelled Spring Forum 2023. The community engagement event in December is about seniors care. Meeting evaluations from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, are positive and show the meetings are meaningful and participants feel they are heard by leadership.
NEW BUSINESS	
Presentation	Title: Immunizations Across the Lifespan Presenter: Roxane Parsons, Communicable Disease Control / Immunization Best Practice Coordinator, Central Zone Roxanne presented information on recommended vaccines and statistics about immunizations across the Central Zone. Visit Immunization (alberta.ca) for more information.
Date of Next Meeting	Date: Dec. 7, 2023 Time: 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Location: Zoom

Our meetings are open to the public. Dates and locations are [available here](#).
[Find your Health Advisory Council here](#). Visit [Together 4 Health](#) (T4H) to engage with AHS online.