

The Access Improvement Report

March 2021 | Vol 6.1

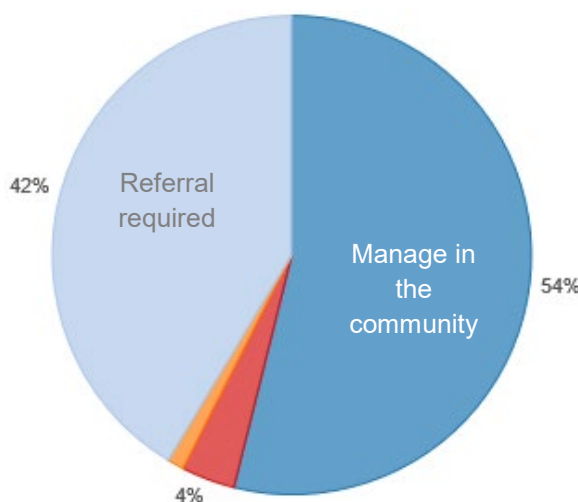
A Quarterly Newsletter from Alberta Health Services' Access Improvement Team

2020 eReferral Year in Review

While this past year was not what any of us expected, there have been some major adjustments and innovations in how we deliver health care. With many practitioners introducing virtual visits into their practice, there has been a surge in available options to accommodate physical distancing.

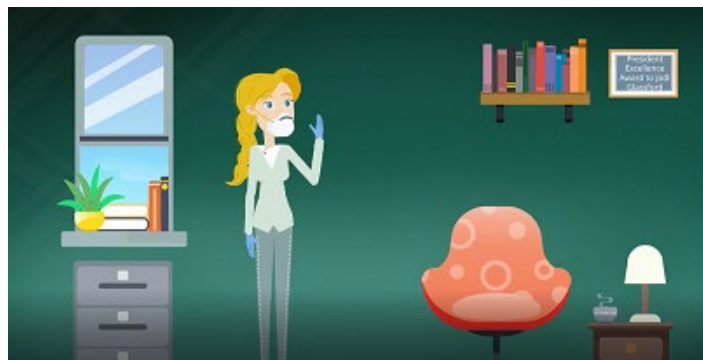
Despite the pandemic, 2020 was one of eReferral's most successful years to date. We received a total of **5,348** Advice Requests and **11,680** Consult Requests, which combined helped us to increase our total submissions to more than 60,000 requests. When looking at the submission numbers per month, we noted a drop that coincided with the shutdown of non-essential services in early spring, but as the provincial relaunch plan was implemented, we saw an increase in both Advice and Consult Requests.

With a shift to more virtual care and utilization of accessing advice from specialists, we are happy to report that of all the completed Advice Requests submitted, 54% were recommended to be managed in the community and did not require an in-person referral. Forty-two percent of those did require a



referral and four per cent was either urgent/emergent requests or information was not provided.

We also developed a video to showcase all of the specialties that joined us in 2020. Watch [video](#) here and join in on the celebration!



Get in Touch with Access Improvement

If you have questions, email us at access.ereferral@ahs.ca or call 1-888-733-3755

For information about eReferral, including training support, visit [eReferral online](#)

For more about QuRE and the Alberta Referral Pathways, visit [Access Improvement](#)

Unsubscribe

If you'd like to unsubscribe from this newsletter, email access.ereferral@ahs.ca

Stay Tuned

The next edition of the *Access Improvement Report* will be released in summer 2021.

Looking to the Future – June 2021 eReferral Changes

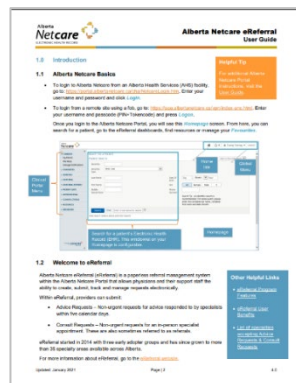
Mark your calendars as there are some exciting changes coming to eReferral in June 2021! We've reviewed a great deal of feedback from a number of different sources, with the goal of improving eReferral for all users. After much discussion amongst our team, as well as through clinical design sessions with a variety of providers and their support staff, we were able to identify a list of enhancements we will make this summer.

The most prominent change happening will be the ability for specialists to provide advice/direction for patient care on a Consult Request submitted by primary care. This will reduce the strain on the health system by avoiding unnecessary in-person appointments. Other changes include enhanced user interfaces for Advice Requests and more default auto population in the system to reduce the number of times information needs to be entered manually. As well, we will be increasing the document upload capability for the specialties to share knowledge and guidance to primary care, which in turn will provide better, more robust experiences for all those involved.

Stay tuned for our next newsletter, and for other communications sent to eReferral users over the next few months that will have more in depth details of what's to come.

Updated eReferral User Guide Now Available!

Looking for eReferral training support? Look no further! The [eReferral User Guide](#) has been updated with new information to help you know exactly what to do when using eReferral.



The next update for this User Guide will occur in summer 2021, as we will make changes to include all of the exciting updates mentioned in the story above.

If you prefer to talk to someone for training help, call the eHealth Netcare Support Service team at 1-855-643-8649 or email ehhealthsupport@cgi.com. Resources and e-training videos are also available [online](#).

Join us at the ACFP Family Medicine Summit – March 5-7

For 65 years, the Alberta College of Family Physicians (ACFP) has held the Family Medicine Summit. It is typically held in beautiful Banff, but this year it's going virtual. And guess who will be there? Us! We are proud to be a sponsor of this year's event and invite you to join us.

While everything will be held virtually, we have an electronic "booth" that will be chalk full of information about eReferral, QuRE and Alberta Referral Pathways. We'll also be available via video on March 5 & 6 to answer any questions you may have.

For more information and to register for the event, go to [ACFP online](#).

QuRE Patient & Caregiver Journal – News & Updates

Navigating the health system can be daunting. Quality Referral Evolution (QuRE) wanted to help make this process a little easier and developed a resource, which is now available to download [online](#).

The 25-page booklet is designed like a journal. It contains the [Patient Referral Checklist](#) and [Patient Consultation Checklist](#) (can be downloaded separately), as well as note pages that can be used to write down reminders, scribble important appointment details and highlight key information. The Journal also contains helpful resources, including contact numbers, websites from the Government of Canada and Government of Alberta, and handy things to remember like what to bring to your doctor's appointments.

With many appointments now held virtually, we wanted patients/caregivers to have a more technologically friendly way of using the Journal. For computer, cell phone and tablet users, you can now download an [e-version](#) of the Journal and write down notes electronically. The e-version requires PDF, but a free version can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

In addition, we have collaborated with AHS Patient Engagement to start another round of patient input on the Journal. Over the next couple of months, AHS Patient Advisors will use the Journal at appointments and provide us with valuable feedback and their thoughts. This is extremely important as we continue to promote this Journal and make sure it is as useful as it can be.

To download your copy of the Journal, head over to our [QuRE website](#). For more information, email us at access.ereferral@ahs.ca or phone 1-888-733-3755.

The image shows a 'Pre-Appointment Notes' form. It includes a 'Checklist' section with items like 'Appointment date & time', 'Appointment address', 'Special instructions (parking or directions)', 'Your health concerns & symptoms', 'Your health goals', 'Provincial healthcare card', 'Your MedList or list of prescriptions and medications', 'Copies of imaging or tests', and 'Health-related insurance'. Below the checklist is a 'Notes' section with a prompt 'Remember to ask the doctor about pre-existing conditions' and several lines for writing.

AHS Employees – You can order paper copies of the Journal through DATA and charge them to your cost centre!

Surgery Autodialer Project Update

An exciting project the Access Improvement team has been a part of is the Edmonton Zone Surgical Autodialer Pilot. The project is currently validating surgical waitlists in the Edmonton Zone and is contacting patients via telephone waiting for plastic, vascular, orthopedic, ear/nose/throat (ENT) and otolaryngology surgeries.

As part of the process, patients are being asked to confirm their identity, and for their provincial personal health number (PHN) and birthdate.

Through this initiative, AHS is contacting up to 350 patients per day. The first phase of this pilot reduced the surgical waitlist in the pilot departments by 5.6 per cent.

The next round of the pilot will begin in March 2021 and will include neurosurgery, thoracic, ophthalmology and oral maxofacial and dental surgeons. For more information, visit www.ahs.ca/waitlist

Alberta Health Services Status on a Waitlist Phone Call

You may have gotten an automated phone call or voicemail from Alberta Health Services (AHS) about status on a waitlist and have been asked to call us back. If you heard this exact script (shown below) – please do not worry. This is a real call and not a scam.

Script if you answered the phone:

"Hello, this is the Alberta Health Services, Surgery Wait List Management Team, automated call out service. We are in the process of confirming the wait list status for [patient first name]. To confirm that we have reached the right number for [patient first name], press 1. If this is a wrong number, press 7."

Script if you answered the phone and confirmed your first name:

"Thank you. For more information regarding this call, please visit our website at ahs.ca/waitlist. We ask that this person, their legal guardian, or their agent, contact the message center for AHS surgery wait list management. The number as shown on your caller ID is 1-888-592-2060. When you call, please have the provincial personal health number available for [patient first name]. To end this call, hang up or press 8. To repeat this message, press 9."

Script if a voicemail was left:

"Hello, this is the Alberta Health Services, Surgery Waitlist Management Team, automated call out service. We are in the process of confirming the wait list status for [patient first name]. For more information about this service, please visit us at ahs.ca/waitlist. To update your records please call 1-888-592-2060."

What do you need to do?

You need to talk to us about your status on a waitlist. Please phone 1-888-592-2060 as soon as possible. We will ask for your provincial personal health number (PHN) and birth date to confirm your identity, so please have them ready when you call us back.

Note: If you hang up or do not call the number back, you will not lose your position on the waitlist and the Surgery Waitlist Management Team will call and speak with you about your waitlist status. However, we encourage you to call 1-888-592-2060 to confirm your status.

The call I received was not the same as the script, what should I do?

Alberta Health Services will never ask for your financial information or for any personal information other than your provincial PHN or birth date during these automated calls.

If the phone call or voicemail you received does not have the same script or asks for additional information (like your Social Insurance Number (SIN)), **DO NOT** call the number. Someone may be pretending to be Alberta Health Services to collect your personal information and scam you.

An Inside Look at ConnectMD

We're excited to share more information with you about ConnectMD – a non-urgent telephone advice service that returns calls within 48 hours in the Edmonton and North Zones. We chatted with Lindsay Steward, Manager, Specialized Health Services with the Edmonton North Zone PCN to learn more about ConnectMD and get an inside look at this amazing program.

The idea for ConnectMD started by chance one day as Lindsay overheard a patient ask one of their on-site specialists why they had been referred to them when their family doctor could have received this information over the phone.

"I remember exactly what they said," says Lindsay. "I can't believe my doctor referred me for this! Had you and him just talked over the phone, it would have avoided the whole visit." This stuck with me and made me think about potential options that could help reduce time, efforts and costs."

Lindsay had heard about Calgary Zone's Specialist LINK telephone advice program and took to doing more research to see if this idea could be adopted in the Edmonton and North Zones. Sure enough, the idea was accepted and in November 2017, ConnectMD opened its phone lines with nine specialty groups.

Fast forward to March 2021 and ConnectMD has 37 specialties with more than 250 specialists available for advice calls. To date, they have received more than 5,000 total calls and have an overall primary care satisfaction rate of 87%. Specialists also love the service, with more than 94% of them agreeing it's a great program.

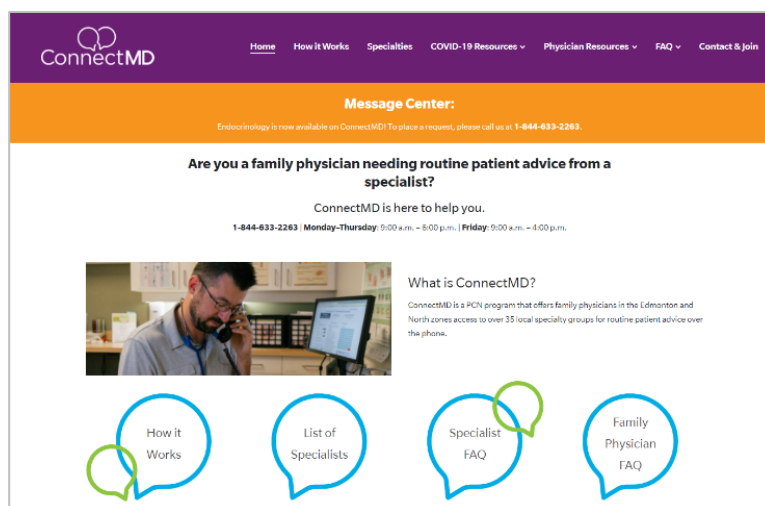
"ConnectMD works for patients and providers," says Lindsay. "It provides cost savings to our healthcare system and cuts back on unnecessary referrals waiting for appointments."

Highlights of ConnectMD include the ability for family physicians and specialists to bill for the requests and that a transcript of the call is sent to the provider to add to their patient's health record.

"Use ConnectMD anytime you have a non-urgent request in the Edmonton or North Zones and prefer to talk to a specialist over the phone," says Lindsay. "It's easy and gets you back to work quickly!"

Just recently, ConnectMD collaborated with eReferral and RAAPID to create a [one-page information sheet](#) that highlights the different options available and when to contact each service. We recommend printing this off and keeping it nearby for future reference.

For more information about ConnectMD, go [online](#). To start a request, call 1-844-633-2263 Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Friday: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.



Who's Who — Access Improvement

Get to know the hardworking team behind eReferral, QuRE and Alberta Referral Pathways with the *Who's Who* employee segment!

This quarter we speak with **Shannon Trettwer (Morcom)**, our Administrative Support in Calgary.

What do you do on the Access Improvement team?

As the admin, I am responsible for a number of different things. I liaise with a variety of different groups to ensure things run smoothly and the correct information, supports and contacts are in place for the business team and our stakeholders.

How is your role helping transform Alberta's referral experience?

With previous clinical and referral experience, I bring a new perspective to the business team and can help make more efficient and beneficial contributions to the various initiatives our Access Improvement team is involved with.

What's a fun fact about yourself?

I was born and raised in Calgary and am an avid animal lover. In my home, we have three cats, two dogs and a boa constrictor as pets. My 5-year daughter is fascinated with watching the snake feed.



"My favorite thing to do on weekends is crafts, drawing and coloring with my daughter."

ALBERTA REFERRAL DIRECTORY

Take a look at the Alberta Referral Directory and see how easy making patient referrals to specialty care can be.

1-855-889-8899 | ard@ahs.ca
AlbertaReferralDirectory.ca

Pink Shirt Day – Standing Up to Bullying

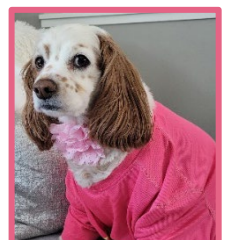
Every year on February 24, we take a stand against bullying. It's never OK, but it unfortunately happens every day. We can make a difference by changing our behaviours and actions and saying "NO!" to bullying.

A few of our Access Improvement team members (and their children and pets!) joined in on this important day and wore the best and brightest of their pink attire. Take a peek!

For more information about Pink Shirt Day, go [online](#).



Laura Silver's son, Tito!



Jen Colp's dog, Marley!

For questions about Access Improvement, email access.ereferral@ahs.ca

*Cover photo by [Adam Chang](#) on [Unsplash](#)