Quality Referral Evolution:
A Literature Review with a Focus on
Improving the Referral and Consultation Process

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ABSTRACT

TOPIC - Teaching and learning in medical education.
CONTEXT: Referral and consultation are important parts of medical practice, and skilled, effective communication between primary care physicians and specialists is essential for safe, high-quality referral processes. Unfortunately, substantial evidence suggests that such communication is frequently incomplete or inadequate. This incurs risk of delayed access to care, inadequate follow-up, partial compliance, duplication of services, and patient frustration. To date, few medical education programs offer formal work-based training and assessment for these important communication skills in the referral process.

BACKGROUND: The QuRE WORKING GROUP (QWG) is composed of members of Universities of Calgary and Alberta, and Alberta Health Services. It represents family medicine, surgical and medical sub-specialties, the universities' residency programs, and AHS Referral and access management. QWG is developing best evidence-based educational resources for teaching and learning the communication skills needed to provide quality referral and consultation. This includes continuous medical learning workshops eligible for continued education credits.

PURPOSE: Quality Referral Evolution (QuRE) is a collaborative initiative to make education and support for quality consultation education part of the medical education programs in Alberta, as well as for accredited self-study for practicing physicians and surgeons in the province.

OBJECTIVES:
1. Understand key concepts of referral/consultation process for best practice
2. Use the Quality Referral Pocket Checklist to guide and appraise referral/consultation letters
3. Improve communication in the referral/consultation process

CONCLUSION: By doing so, the QuRE program hopes to improve the quality of communication in the referral and consultative process, and, consequently provide better access to care for Albertans.

SELECTED REFERENCE LIST (clustered under themes)

Problems and issues with the referral and consultation process


Analysis and suggested solutions


22. Davies P. What do we actually know about the referral process? British Journal of General Practice 2011; 61(593):752-3


Interventions


**Overviews**