



# F.O.C.U.S.

## ON EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

# FOSTERING OPEN CONVERSATIONS THAT UNLEASH SOLUTIONS

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### Believing in the power of information

The HQCA's legislation mandates that we measure, monitor and assess health service quality.

**Transparency:** fosters trust among the public and the healthcare system. Healthcare is important to all Albertans. Knowledge can start the conversations that need to happen, and when necessary, lead to improvements.

**Information:** a reliable tool for healthcare providers and patients alike, to understand how these emergency departments are performing.

**Uniquely Albertan:** This type of health system information reporting in Canada currently happens predominantly at the national level, but not with this specific provincial lens.

### How did we get here?

Over 18 months the HQCA engaged with emergency department stakeholders from Alberta Health, AHS, Covenant Health, AMA, academia, and patients to determine which measures would be most helpful from a quality improvement perspective.

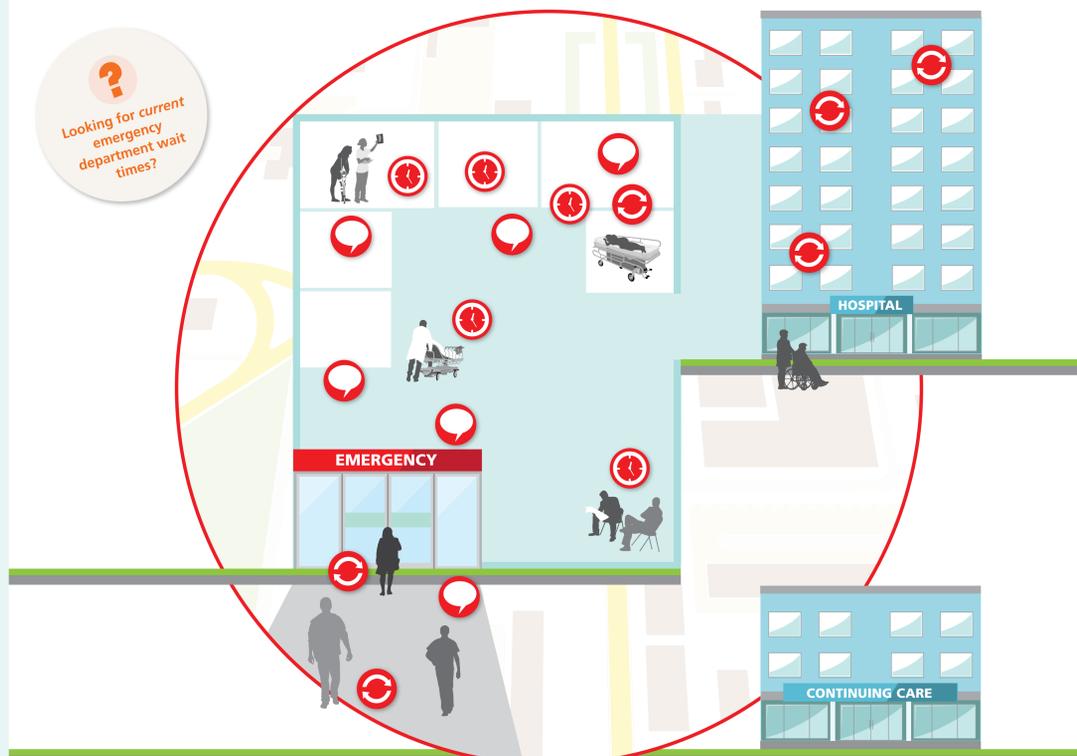
The *Triple Aim Framework* and an input, throughput, output logic model guided the design.

Focus groups with patients and with front-line providers helped to identify which measures would be appropriate and useful for public reporting.

User comprehension of the data was important so three phases of usability testing were conducted. Redesign led to increased comprehension.

Two data dictionaries were created, one with public friendly explanations, and the other with precise definitions that meet expectations of technical experts.

## The Emergency Department (ED) – part of a healthcare system not just a room



- Patient time to see an emergency doctor
- Patient emergency department total length of stay (LOS)
- Length of time emergency department patients wait for a hospital bed after a decision to admit
- Time for X-ray completion
- Time waiting for specialist/admitting doctor opinion

- Hospital patients who require an alternate level of care
- Length of patient hospital stay compared to Canadian average
- Patients who left without being seen (LWBS) by an emergency department doctor
- Patients who returned to the emergency department within 72 hours
- Patients waiting in the emergency department for a hospital bed
- Hospital occupancy

- Patient experience with staff introductions
- Patient experience with communication about follow-up care
- Patient experience with help for pain
- Overall rating of care
- Overall patient experience with emergency department communication
- Communication with patient about possible side effects of medicines
- Patient reason for emergency department visit

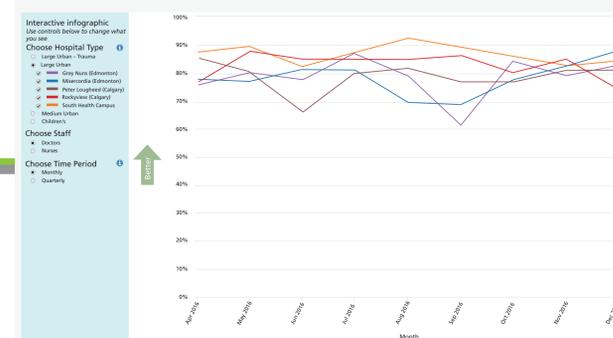
- Emergency departments are often seen as the “canary in the coal mine” about what’s happening in the broader healthcare system.
- Provides an unprecedented amount of information about the 16 busiest emergency departments in Alberta from the last five years.
- A single measure doesn’t provide a picture of what’s happening in the entire healthcare system. That’s why we provide 18 measures for emergency care. By looking at these measure together, conversations can be started as to what may be happening and why.
- The information is grouped into peer groupings so that “like” hospitals can be compared and trends can be analyzed. It doesn’t make sense to compare hospitals where patient populations are different.

### About the patient experience

**ED experience survey measures:** results of a survey we have conducted with people who have visited an emergency department about their experience.

#### Patient experience with staff introductions

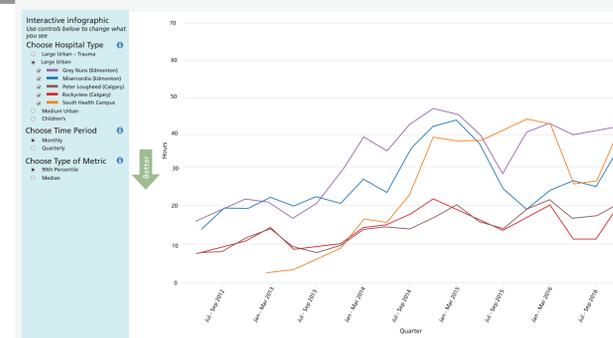
Percentage of patients who reported that doctors and/or nurses always introduced themselves during their emergency department visit.



**Administrative measures:** with data provided by Alberta Health Services.

#### Length of time emergency department patients wait for a hospital after a decision to admit

Time from when it's decided a patient will stay in the hospital to when they leave the emergency department to go to a hospital bed



The combination of these two types of data provides a clear picture of what patients in Alberta have actually experienced.

### What's next?

- Data to be updated regularly, each quarter
- Evaluation of the measures from stakeholders input and from the website feedback button
- We have started our next FOCUS area – Primary Healthcare

#### ABOUT THE HQCA

The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) uses information about the health of Albertans and the health system to study, report on, and improve patient safety and health service quality. We work with patients and the public, those who provide healthcare, and the government to promote and improve high quality and safe patient care.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the many people who contributed to the FOCUS ON EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED) project: HQCA FOCUS ED project team, ED stakeholder group, frontline ED staff and members of the public who participated in focus groups and usability testing.