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A message from Brian Holroyd and Scott Fielding

Over the next three years, the focus of the Emergency Strategic Clinical Network™ (ESCN™) will be evolving to address challenges within the Alberta environment.

This Transformational Roadmap outlines the strategic directions for our network that will serve to support Alberta Health Services (AHS) in providing a patient focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. It is built on the successes achieved by the considerable efforts of emergency care staff; the input from patients and families; and AHS support teams: including partnerships with 103 Emergency Departments and six Urgent Care Centres. Over the last two years, 2.1 million patients visited our emergency departments with a variety of presentations and acuity. Ongoing health system demands continue to influence bed capacity and flow through issues impacting the emergency departments.

Over the past several years, the ESCN has shown leadership in the development of provincial clinical knowledge topics, the harmonization of provincial policies related to emergency care, as well as ensuring that staff and physicians have access to consistent training and standardizing measurement and outcomes. The ESCN has also led innovations in research and stakeholder collaboration. The ESCN team looks forward to working with Albertans to ensure that top quality emergency care is accessible and driven by evidence and compassion.

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Introduction

The Emergency Strategic Clinical Network™ (ESCN) Transformational Roadmap (TRM) 2019 – 2022 outlines the strategic directions, priorities and outcomes for the ESCN; that are aligned with the Alberta Health Services Health and Business Plan, and will help the network achieve its vision.

The 2019 – 2022 TRM is a refresh of the 2014 – 2017 TRM building on the strong foundations and successes which have been created through the dedicated efforts of the ESCN team, its partners, emergency care staff, patients and their families.

The ESCN will focus on evidence informed practice, integration, innovation, and commitment to partnerships to move this work forward. The TRM builds on the commitment of the emergency community and the significant work already underway to improve emergency care in Alberta. There is a recognition that although the TRM is based on current state, due to the realities of emergency care, emerging issues and priorities can shift and the ESCN is ready to respond rapidly so emergency departments are equipped to meet these challenges.

As the ESCN moves forward with its new three year plan, it is important to acknowledge the considerable achievements of the network of the ESCN and emergency departments over the past three years. Figure 1, below, highlights this work.
The above infographic (Figure 1) shows our progress, however, our work continues. Our priority is to improve the patient experience and the quality of care patients receive, and to ensure better outcomes for patients being seen in an emergency department through evidence based care.
Refresh - Transformational Roadmap 2019-2022

All Strategic Clinical Networks have Transformational Roadmaps (TRM), or strategic plans, that outline strategies, priorities and activities that provide focus for the SCN over three years. The refresh of the ESCN TRM is a result of a comprehensive consultation and planning process. This included:

- An analysis of the ESCN’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Leadership review of 2014-2017 priorities, identifying changes that could impact future work of the ESCN; and to confirm strategic directions for the next three years.
- Document reviews, including the:
  - Alberta Health Services Health and Business Plan 2017-2020,
  - Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) Alberta Quality Matrix for Health
  - AHS four Foundational Strategies
  - Pan SCN 2019-2024 TRM

The ESCN TRM reflects input from the stakeholders who were involved during the development of this document.

Alberta Health Services is a large and complex system that faces high levels of change. To achieve the ESCN vision many elements require commitment across the organization; building partnerships and working in collaboration with stakeholders will be required to ensure high quality emergency care for Albertans.

Mission and Vision

Throughout the refresh process, the ESCN has been mindful of both the mission and vision of the network, which remain unchanged for the 2019-2022 planning cycle. First approved by the Core Committee in 2014, there is confidence the existing mission and vision continues to reflect the ESCN purpose, and serves as the “compass” guiding work over the next three years.

VISION: To build an inclusive network that supports the advancement of evidence-informed emergency care for all Albertans.

MISSION: To support quality patient and family-centered emergency care driven by education, innovation, and practice-changing research through collaboration.
Guiding Principles

The ESCN is a group of healthcare professionals, patients and family advisors working together across the province to improve emergency services in Alberta. Our work is guided by the following principles:

Accountability:

- We work to contribute towards the AHS Vision and Mission.

People-centered care:

- We are working to improve the patient and family journey through emergency care from the time they seek care until the time the patient is discharged or admitted.

Responsibility:

- We continue to look for new ways to make the best use of our resources, improve access to emergency care and make sure Albertans receive high-quality care.
- We strive to develop internal and external resources that support patient-centered care and meet the needs of the diverse patient population groups.

Innovation:

- We will work to continually improve patient-focused emergency care by enabling research and innovation to develop solutions to address emergency care concerns, prepare for tomorrow’s challenges, and develop new and improved services and treatments for patients in ED.

Communication:

- We will ensure clear two-way communication with our community. It is essential to our work because it will allow not only to share information, but also to receive feedback and strive for continuous improvement.
The Context for Planning

Since its launch, the ESCN has led many new initiatives that have been identified as priorities for the next three years. A number of changes and identified trends have influenced the ESCN’s response in planning for the future. Changes in the healthcare system, high demand that exceeds resources, and challenges with sustainability due to conflicting priorities have reinforced the need to be flexible and responsive in order to succeed as a leader in emergency care in the province.

Facts of the Emergency Departments and Urgent Care in Alberta

| Number of Emergency Departments in Alberta | 103 |
| Number of Urgency Care in Alberta | 6 |
| Visits to ED/UCC 2017/2018 (Provincial) | 2,103,782 1% increase vs PY |
| Visits to ED/UCC 2016/2017 (Provincial) | 2,078,261 |

Strategic Alignment

The AHS Health Plan and Business Plan 2017-2020 is a commitment to Albertans to improve:

- Patient and family experiences;
- Patient and population health outcomes;
- The experience and safety of our people and safety; and
- Financial health and value for money.

The ESCN’s work is guided by these four organizational goals. Working in partnership with key stakeholders and providers the ESCN will to contribute to AHS’ vision through the work described in this TRM. These strategies guide the ESCN’s efforts to sustain safe, high-quality emergency care for the benefit of all Albertans.

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1 Alberta Health Services, Health Plan & Business Plan 2019 – 2020. The full report can be viewed at: http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/about/page13365.aspx
The following diagram of the ESCN strategic directions, priorities, objectives, actions and expected outcomes in the 2019-2022 TRM shows the alignment with the AHS Health and Business Plan 2017 – 2020, (see Figure 2 below).

Building on past and current work, the revised TRM reflects changes focusing the work of the ESCN in response to the needs of emergency departments and Albertans.

Figure 2 ESCN TRM summary 2019-2022
Strategic Direction #1 – Respond to the Needs of our Patient Population

Priority: Patient Experience in Emergency Departments (ED) /Urgent Care Centres (UCC)

Since 2016, the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) surveys Albertans about their experience in the 16 busiest emergency departments in the province. The survey data is combined with ED operational data to analyze and validate the patient experience, delivery of care, and wait times.

Surveying patients about their experiences in the emergency department provides a voice for patients about the quality of their care. The ESCN is using this data, which is updated quarterly, to focus on improving the patient’s and families’ experience in the emergency department and urgent care centres.

Objective

To improve patients’ and families’ experiences in ED/UCC by improving provider/patient communication, timely patient access and quality patient care.

A key part of the patient experience can be determined by communication with healthcare providers. In previous HQCA emergency department patient experience surveys, communication by healthcare providers was one of the most important aspects of determining patients’ overall ratings of care.²

Using information design the ESCN will partner with operations and our patients and families to develop strategies to improve communications.

Focus Areas

In addition improving the experience of all Albertans presenting to the ED the ESCN will focus on the following populations:

- Seniors,
- Indigenous populations,
- Pediatric and youth population with addiction and mental health conditions.
Actions

To ensure the voice of patients and families is heard the ESCN will:

- Utilize HQCA patient experience data as baseline,
- Partner with AHS internal expertise (i.e. Communications) to build on AHS overall communications strategy,
- Collaborate with Seniors, Addiction & Mental Health and Indigenous Health SCN,
- Connect with the Provincial Indigenous Health and Cancer Control Centre’s,
- Team with University of Alberta Information Design, Human Factors, and AHS operations to develop a roadmap to improve communications using social media venues,
- Engage with front-line staff, and
- Lead a CIHR funded grant “Understanding and Defining Quality of Care in the ED with First Nations Members in Alberta” to guide ESCN actions.

1 HQCA survey website https://focus.hqca.ca/emergencydepartments/

Expected Outcomes

Through the work described above the ESCN will:

- Decrease the stigma related to patients with addictions and mental health presentations,
- Improve communication in ED using information design strategies,
- Develop pathways related to admitting criteria with addiction and mental health population’
- Improve patient experience in ED/UCCs,
- Support ED/UCC staff in communication techniques that facilitate care of patients and their family members,
- Spread awareness of the acknowledgment of land for Indigenous communities.

Strategic Direction #2 – Partner as Problem Solvers and Innovators

Priority: Opioid Crisis

Opioid Use Disorders (OUDs) are a major public health crisis affecting an increasing number of Albertans. In the first 18 weeks of 2018 (Jan. 1 to May. 6, 2018), 228 individuals in Alberta died from an apparent accidental drug poisoning or death related to fentanyl as reported by Alberta Health.3 (Alberta Q2 Interim

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Report 2018). Emergency Departments (EDs) continue to play an important role with OUD patients as the rate of ED visits related to opioid use and substance misuse increased by 118% from Jan. 1, 2014 to Sep. 30, 2017.\(^4\)

In response to the opioid crisis the ESCN has established a provincially coordinated Buprenorphine/Naloxone (Suboxone®) opioid agonist treatment (OAT) strategy for patients presenting to EDs and UCCs with OUDs in Alberta. This includes patient pathways, and sustainable transitions to community and primary healthcare providers and services.

Objective

To support a culture of harm reduction and to help Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) patients by reducing deaths, overdoses, and other health and social challenges that arise from substance use and addictions.

Actions

Over the next three years the ESCN will:

- Assist in reduction in stigma associated with addictions and opioid use by using the voice of patients with lived experiences,
- Lead a provincially coordinated harm reduction education efforts for all who work and practice in EDs and UCCs, and the public visiting EDs,
- Work with Clinical Knowledge & Content Management (CKCM) to disseminate and implement provincially standardized guidelines for ED and UCC patients that present with OUDs and require interventions to the ED,
- Partner with ED/UCC operations to meet Alberta Health provincial reporting requirements related to OUD patient ED presentations,
- Integrate all Emergency SCN™ opioid crisis response initiatives with the larger context of the response to the opioid crisis across Alberta,
- Align with the relevant recommendations from Opioid Wisely, Choosing Wisely™ Canada, and
- Collaborate with the AHS Surveillance and Reporting team and Harm Reduction Team to evaluate and implement harm reductions strategies that will assist those living with OUD.

Expected Outcomes

By focusing on the opioid crisis in Alberta the ESCN will develop an opioid agonist treatment program in ED/UCC including:

- Contributing to CKCM pathway development for Acute/Chronic pain management relevant to ED patient care,

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- Develop educational materials for both ED patients and healthcare providers,
- Implement and sustain an approved pain pathway in collaboration with other SCNs and Alberta Pain Strategy,
- Integrate with other opioid crisis response initiatives provincially,
- Facilitate patient transitions into community services,
- Inform implementation of the ED response to the OUD crisis with an evidence-based research from a systematic literature review, and
- Utilize program and patient level measures on successful implementation of OAT.

Strategic Direction #3 – Optimized People and Resources

Priorities: Improved Educational Opportunities, Connect Care, EMS Offload, Improve Staff Safety

Education

Within the ED/UCC environment changes are continual and occur rapidly; as a result there is a constant demand to address the learning needs of health care providers working in this environment. It is critical to ensure providers deliver current, evidence-based care, and that they work to their full scope of practice. It is essential to use multiple strategies to the deliver training and education on clinical pathways, knowledge, and competencies across multiple sites within a large, diverse geographic landscape.

The ESCN will continue to partner with Health Professions Strategy and Practice (HPSP) to ensure there is standardization of competencies, as well as learning materials. Providing consistent, current resources to all facilities reduces the burden for the individual clinical nurse educators to do this development on their own.

Connect Care

Connect Care; AHS’s clinical information system, will be the bridge between information, healthcare teams, patients and the future. The foundation of Connect Care is a common clinical information system, which will directly impact everyone who provides patient care within AHS, resulting in transformation of patient care provision.

Work to design, build, standardize and continuously improve Connect Care content. Significant work is underway including the standardization of terminology, development of orders and order sets; creating consistent clinical content standards throughout AHS. The ESCN will continue to support the work to standardize clinical content that supports best practice and evidence-informed clinical knowledge for all 103 EDs and UCCs.

EMS Offload

Appropriate use of limited clinical resources is a key objective of the ESCN. The ESCN will continue to work with all of the zones, as well as the 103 ED and 6 UCCs to facilitate the transfer of patients from EMS to the ED. Due to environmental and resource conditions in each of the facilities, solutions to the EMS offload situation may need to be individualized. The ESCN will ensure that evidence-based activities
are considered, and shared across the province to address timely EMS offload and transfer of patient care to the ED.

Staff Safety

Continue to work with front line providers, Workplace health and safety (WHS), managers and physicians to understand what situations and circumstances where they feel they are unsafe. Once areas are identified, the ESCN will collaborate with these providers to develop options for them to improve and ensure their safety when working with patients and family members. This also includes addressing overall “burnout” of our frontline providers due to everyday work in stressful situations.

Objective:

The ESCN will maintain a strong working relationship with Connect Care to ensure an appropriate design, build and roll out/implementation of Connect Care to all EDs/UCCs. The ESCN will partner with EMS to create standardized definitions and linkage between EMS and AHS Emergency/UCC NACRS data set.

Actions:

- Participate as active members of the Emergency and EMS Area Council for Connect Care CKCM work/pathway development that will drive clinical support integrated into Connect Care,
- Represent ED/UCCs in the design and development stages of the Epic build to standardized clinical knowledge and practice in ED/UCCs,
- Standardized/harmonized policy and clinical guiding documents implemented within Connect Care,
- Influence clinical documentation to standardized e-documentations within the ASAP module,
- Work closely with other parts of the organization and external stakeholders to improve the safety of our staff and physicians working in the ED/UCC,
- Partner with HPSP standardize nursing education and coordinate with Connect Care to access and utilize nursing references and procedures for competency development,
- Collaborate with EMS and operations to develop a process map that will improve mutual reporting and data collection,
- Identify activities and situations that place providers in harmful situations, and
- Recognize actions that can be used to decrease the stress that our front line providers feel every day when coming to work.

Expected Outcomes

The work of the ESCN is to improve educational opportunities, support the development of Connect Care and EMS offload reporting by

- Monitor and assist in the development of the ASAP module,
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- Improve and standardize workflows with a focus on patient care,
- Support the design, build, testing, implement, standardization and continuously improve Connect Care content that supports clinicians and established workflows,
- Ensure that staff and physicians feel safe when coming to work,
- Support the development and implementation of CKCM topics within ASAP,
- Assistance zonal leadership in implementing activities that will improve EMS offloading,
- Promote standardized reporting of EMS Offloading,
- Support staff when dealing with stressful situations,
- Ensure that staff and physicians feel safe when coming to work, and
- Distribute knowledge and insight into dealing with hazardous environments and situations.

Strategic Direction #4 – Health System Research and Innovation

Priority: Integrate Research for Better Implementation and Improvement

Research is a foundational element necessary for the success of the ESCN. The ESCN Scientific Office plays a crucial role in moving the ESCN strategies and priorities forward. Through research, the Scientific Office positions the ESCN as a key contributor to emergency medicine research, and the support translation of best-evidence into practice in EDs/UCC throughout the province.

The Scientific Office sponsors and promotes high impact research and capacity-building opportunities that align with the ESCN’s strategic priorities. It conducts and disseminates research to address the healthcare, and health service needs of Albertans who visit Alberta’s EDs and UCCs. The focus is on improving the quality of care, translation of knowledge and ensuring value for money in the area of emergency medicine through partnerships.

Objectives

The following are the objectives for research and innovation of the ESCN Scientific Office:

- Build emergency research capacity in Alberta,
- Advance and disseminate research knowledge, and
- Engage and build partnerships for research, quality improvement and innovation.

Actions

Build Capacity:

- Develop emergency medicine research skills through mentorship,
- Provision of research resources, and
- Fostering a research culture.
Advance and Disseminate Research Knowledge:

- Engaging in high quality research studies,
- Obtaining research funding, and
- Completion of publications, conference presentations, journal article dissemination,

Engage and Build Partnerships for Research and Innovation

- Engage the ESCN Research Advisory Board (RAB),
- Building ESCN research community,
- Support cross-SCN collaboration, and
- Collaboration with national and international Emergency Medicine research programs.

Expected Outcomes

- Completed research projects, both ESCN and Pan SCN,
- Trained students and mentees in Emergency Medicine research skills,
- Supported rigorous projects financially,
- Published scholarly manuscripts, and
- Engaged Researchers in Emergency Medicine research.

Next Steps

The ESCN 2019-2022 TRM outlines the priorities, objectives, Actions and expected outcomes across four strategic areas. To ensure that the ESCN is achieving its objectives as outlined in the TRM a process for oversight, development of action plans, an annual review process, measurement of the plan, and final evaluation at the end of the third year will then lead into the cycle of a TRM refresh.

The ESCN Communication and Engagement plan will be updated to reflect and align with the 2019-2022 TRM.