

Alberta's Strategic Clinical Networks

Provincial post-operative clinical pathway for head and neck cancer surgery

The Goal

Providing appropriate care for the head and neck cancer patients is complex, crossing multiple program areas and health disciplines. Coordinating a smooth transition between care providers can be challenging and can result in less than optimal outcomes for patients and system efficiencies.

To improve the patient experience and address care gaps, a provincial post-operative clinical pathway for major head and neck cancer surgery was designed and implementation is underway.



The Process

Over 70 stakeholders including clinicians, operational leads, and front-line staff were involved in this project. Teams reviewed best practices and bench marked standards with other leading head and neck cancer centres across Canada. Provincial components of the pathway and performance metrics were developed and clinical teams adapted their patient care processes with the goals of:

- reducing ventilation and sedation and promoting early mobility in the ICU;
- better coordination of care between providers to improve the patient experience and health outcomes .

The Outcome

Early results from implementation of the ICU component has shown the following:

- The percentage of patients with no mechanical ventilation upon arrival in ICU increased from 15% to 80% in Edmonton, and 6% to 31% in Calgary.
- The percentage of patients with an ICU length of stay less than 24 hours increased from 21% to 80% in Edmonton, and 66% to 89% in Calgary.
- The percentage of patients re-admitted to ICU decreased from 16% to 0% in Edmonton, and decreased from 4% to 0% in Calgary.

The Team

This project is led by a group of academic cancer surgeons in partnership with the Cancer SCN, the Critical Care SCN, and the Surgery SCN.