

Strategic Clinical Networks

Bariatric Friendly Hospital Initiative

Caring for patients with obesity in the hospital setting

The Goal

The continuing rise in obesity is a global health issue. Approximately 31% of adult Albertans have obesity. The impact on both the individual and the health care system is substantial.

Patients living with obesity are at significantly higher risk in health care settings for injury and complications, due to inadequate facility design, equipment, or staff competencies in their care. As well, access and availability of appropriate equipment results in delay of care and impacts health care and patient safety. Many health care providers lack the knowledge of the complex nature and causes of obesity; and believe that if a person exercises more and eats less, they can lose weight (which is not true). **Weight bias** generally refers to negative attitudes toward a person because he or she has obesity.



Alberta Health Services (AHS) Workers Compensation Claims demonstrate that the majority of long term staff injuries are attributed to sprains and strains.

Developing and implementing standards will improve how patients with obesity are cared for in Alberta's hospitals.

The Process

The Bariatric Friendly Hospital Initiative at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital will focus on developing standards for a bariatric friendly hospital environment within AHS facilities, in alignment with *AHS Patient First and Our People Strategies*. These standards will support health care providers to: become more knowledgeable about obesity and its impact on quality care, work effectively and compassionately with patients with obesity, and develop competencies in safe patient handling.

The Outcome

Standards are being developed in the following four areas:

- ❖ **Health Provider Professional Competency**-Educating health care providers to become more knowledgeable about obesity and work effectively with patients with obesity.
- ❖ **Patient and Provider Safety**-Ensuring that hospital units have the proper equipment to safely manage lifting and transferring patients with bariatric care needs.
- ❖ **Transitions in Care**-Sharing important information when patients with bariatric care needs are transferred between departments in the hospital.
- ❖ **Data, Evaluation and Monitoring**-Building a data infrastructure and identifying required electronic metrics to support patients, and our healthcare system in the care of patients with obesity.

The Team

This initiative is being led by the Diabetes, Obesity and Nutrition Strategic Clinic Network (DON SCN), in collaboration with South Zone leadership, University of Alberta, and the Canadian Obesity Network.

