## Improving Access to Endoscopy Services Through a Diagnosis-Based Waitlist Management System

SCNergy, Summer 2022



The Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network (DHSCN), in partnership with endoscopy teams and leaders, is aiming to improve patient access to endoscopic procedures through a provincial initiative called Alberta Coding Access Targets for Endoscopy (ACATs-E).

ACATs-E is a waitlist management system for endoscopy based on high-quality data. It is built on the substantial positive outcomes achieved through the Alberta

<u>Coding Access Targets for Surgery (ACATS)</u> program, and will help improve access to endoscopic procedures through standardized waitlist management systems and booking processes across Alberta.

ACATs-E will benefit all Albertans. It will improve the patient experience by improving equity of endoscopy access and ensuring patients receive their procedure within a clinically acceptable timeframe. The integrated waitlist management tools within ACATs-E will also provide clarity on the appropriate prioritization of endoscopy procedures; assist in understanding where lag time occurs; set performance targets; and generate reliable objective data which can be acted upon to improve patient flow and the overall system efficiency.

A gastrointestinal endoscopy is a nonsurgical procedure that is used to examine a person's digestive tract, and allows medical professionals to examine, diagnose, and sometimes treat patients with digestive health conditions.

Prior to ACATs-E there was not a standardized approach to patient scheduling, waitlist reporting and management for endoscopies. The goal now is to create system efficiencies that will allow providers to better manage endoscopy waitlists so that patients are scheduled for their procedures based on their diagnosis and the urgency of their conditions.





In 2019, there were approximately 180,000 adult gastrointestinal endoscopic procedures performed in Alberta. Since that time, during the pandemic, concerns over long wait times and wait lists in relation to deferred procedures and reduced endoscopy capacity have intensified. However, without an effective method to gather data on indications and acuity for endoscopy and standardized approaches to patient scheduling and waitlist reporting and management, it was not possible to report on wait lists or the urgency level of those waiting for endoscopy procedures. ACATs-E presents an accurate method to capture this data and to refine the way patients are scheduled for endoscopies.

The foundation of ACATs-E is a set of standardized diagnosisbased codes, designed by a provincial team of medical professionals, that identify a spectrum of conditions ranging from severe pathologies, such as colon cancer, to milder diseases such as reflux disease. These codes will indicate both the reason for the procedure and the urgency of the case, and whether the procedure is



needed for diagnostic, therapeutic, or monitoring purposes.

From a provincial implementation perspective, the integration of ACATs-E into Connect Care, Alberta Health Services' provincial electronic clinical information system, has created an ideal digital infrastructure to capture, analyze and report on wait times at provider, site, zone, and provincial levels in near real time.

In addition to its operational relevance in scheduling endoscopies, ACATs-E data will also be used to:

- Monitor and evaluate trends in demand and supply for endoscopies across Alberta and whether they are being performed within clinically appropriate timeframes.
- Inform strategic decision making around resource allocation.
- Assist in supporting a coordinated pandemic response.
- Allow for assessment of the frequency of low-yield procedures.

Dedicated ACATs-E team leads are currently providing education and support to endoscopy providers across the province as they implement ACATs-E. These team leads will work with physicians and their booking teams to ensure they understand how to use the codes, and how to generate and use the reports, in order to ensure a smooth transition from current systems to a single electronic platform.

ACATs-E will be implemented provincially in a staggered approach at all 50 endoscopy sites – with the first 22 sites scheduled for completion by September 2022, and the remaining 28 sites implemented according to the Connect Care schedule, beginning with launch five.

For more information on ACATs-E, please visit the <u>Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network website</u> or email <u>ACATsEndoscopy@ahs.ca</u>.