

Quality Referral Evolution: A Literature Review with a Focus on Improving the Referral and Consultation Process

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ABSTRACT

TOPIC – Teaching and learning in medical education.

CONTEXT: Referral and consultation are important parts of medical practice, and skilled, effective communication between primary care physicians and specialists is essential for safe, high-quality referral processes. Unfortunately, substantial evidence suggests that such communication is frequently incomplete or inadequate. This incurs risk of delayed access to care, inadequate follow-up, partial compliance, duplication of services, and patient frustration. To date, few medical education programs offer formal work-based training and assessment for these important communication skills in the referral process.

BACKGROUND: The QuRE WORKING GROUP (QWG) is composed of members of Universities of Calgary and Alberta, and Alberta Health Services. It represents family medicine, surgical and medical sub-specialties, the universities' residency programs, and AHS Referral and access management. QWG is developing best evidence-based educational resources for

teaching and learning the communication skills needed to provide quality referral and consultation. This includes continuous medical learning workshops eligible for continued education credits.

PURPOSE: Quality Referral Evolution (QuRE) is a collaborative initiative to make education and support for quality consultation education part of the medical education programs in Alberta, as well as for accredited self-study for practicing physicians and surgeons in the province.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand key concepts of referral/consultation process for best practice
2. Use the Quality Referral Pocket Checklist to guide and appraise referral/consultation letters
3. Improve communication in the referral/consultation process

CONCLUSION: By doing so, the QuRE program hopes to improve the quality of communication in the referral and consultative process, and, consequently provide better access to care for Albertans.

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