Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre – Emergency Department overcapacity protocols

RED DEER – Strategies to reduce wait times at the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre (RDRHC) Emergency Department involve all aspects of the regional health care system and are ongoing.

New protocols at the RDRHC involve guidelines and triggers to initiate and coordinate actions that address ED wait times when certain pressures are reached.

The protocols provide clear process for all staff and leaders, and facilitates patient care coordination from services throughout the RDRHC and rural hospitals, to Community Health, Mental Health and Addiction, Seniors Health and Allied Services – including EMS, Lab, and Diagnostic Imaging.

Some of the strategies included in the protocol to improve patient flow during peak pressure periods include:

- Using over capacity spaces for patients waiting discharge
- Holding outpatient tests to expedite ED patient tests
- Using overcapacity spaces in the ED to see patients
- Redeploying staff to facilitate discharge planning

Strategies to reduce ED pressures aim to achieve the best outcomes for all patients, and system efficiencies, by matching the right program and provider, as early as possible.

The protocols guide response to overcapacity, while increasing access to healthcare services and maintaining patient safety and quality of care.

Some of the triggers for initiating the overcapacity protocol include:

- More than 35 per cent of ED care spaces are blocked
- No ED space is available for new urgent patients
- Inpatient hospital beds in the facility are all occupied
- EMS resources reach certain strains that could affect response times

Recent strategies already in place include the reconfiguration and renovations of the RDRHC ED. The renovations have enhanced patient flow within the ED.