

Patient Flow Strategy

Patient flow is a system in emergency departments (ED) that monitors the flow of the patient to see the physician and receive ED or inpatient care promptly with minimal wait times. Patient Flow Strategy is measured by how timely patients are seen, treated and if needed admitted through hospital emergency department. Long wait time for this type of care can impact the health of the patient. When proper access to and flow through the ED is timely and successful, the public is confident that the health care system is working well for their care needs.

The South East LHIN patient flow strategy was created to prevent patients being delayed or denied access to the right care at the right time, and in the right place by the right care team. The South East LHIN continues to develop a united, organized, and adaptable plan to address system-wide patient flow issues. Some key areas to focus on:

- identify clients at risk and obtain a better understanding of the patient coming into the Emergency Room (ER) and where they should be going to reduce the length of stays in hospitals, ER wait times and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients remaining in hospital beds
- help the senior population to maintain independent living at home and reduce illness or injury that could require the use of ERs or admission to hospital
- understanding the supply and demands of ER patient flow
- review and understand needs of patients coming to ED, where services could be received elsewhere
- improve patient flow transition to other hospitals, Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), and the community sector
- reduce the number of patients returning to hospital less than 30 days after their last hospital stay

Patient flow remains a top priority for all South East LHIN health care organizations. The past two years has seen each organization (hospitals, CCAC, Long Term Care homes and community support sector) imitating several projects to improve flow for the patient. These projects included:

- ED rapid assessment units
- 72 hour express beds
- Patient flow navigators
- 24 hour post-discharge follow up calls to reduce patient from coming back to hospital for non-emergency reasons
- Early discharge planning
- Patient flow data monitoring.

Hospitals and CCAC are working on the in hospital patient flow while South East LHIN senior leadership have also focused on system wide improvements in patient flow. Recently, a Province-wide Life and Limb policy and a LHIN wide patient repatriation policy (return patient

to their home hospital within 24 hours of notification) was supported and started. A web based tool to assist in the implementation of the policy has also occurred.

Although some success has been identified the acute care hospital continues to regularly struggle with patient waiting time for ED care, inpatient care and cancelled surgeries. An extensive review of patient flow activities and cultures is underway with the goal of identifying any underlying causes to lessen the wait times.