

Getting Test Results and Clinical Guidance to the Front Lines of Primary Care in Alberta: A qualitative study

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Aim

- to evaluate a care model developed in response to the first wave of COVID-19 in Alberta, Canada
- to facilitate improved implementation and potential scaling of the CIP,
- to understand the contextual factors that shaped the creation, and use, of the CIP's data and clinical pathways

Background

As with elsewhere in the world, the majority of COVID-19 patients in Canada's first waves of the pandemic did not require acute care. The Calgary health zone sought ways to effectively manage these patients in community-based primary care. The COVID-19 Integrated Pathway (CIP) is an intervention developed in the Calgary health zone to facilitate the flow of data about, and provision of primary care to, these patients.

The CIP – which has been used during since the start of the pandemic– is comprised of two inter-related components:

- 1) a data pathway that disseminates patient COVID-19 lab test results from the province's public health system to local primary care organizations
- 2) a clinical pathway or algorithm that offers guidance for patient care

Method

Study Design: Inductive, open-focused interviews with key informants elicited the contextual factors shaping the creation, uptake, use, and effectiveness of the CIP

Setting: Key informants (n=57) from

- Calgary health zone public health
- primary care facilities
- patients who had transited the CIP (n=5)

Intervention: The CIP has 2 components:

- the Information Pathway
- the Clinical Pathway

CIP integrates PCNs, acute care specialists, and Alberta's Public Health and HealthLink telephone referral systems to provide follow-up and social work referral, as well as attach patients to medical homes for continuity of care

Outcome Measures

Contextual factors shaped the creation and implementation of the CIP

Qualitative Findings

A range of contextual pre-conditions facilitated the rapid development of the CIP's components in the Calgary health zone, as well as their uptake and evolution. These included:

- a history of collaboration and coordination across the Calgary health zone
- existing organizational structures between AHS and Calgary's 7 PCNs
- champions within multiple systems of the health sector
- existing expertise and leadership in developing and using clinical algorithms for the provision of primary care

Discussion

- The CIP's data and clinical pathways helped deliver clear, consistent, and timely care to COVID-19 patients in the Calgary health zone
- While there may be some challenges to scaling the intervention, sustaining the CIP will create a more robust pandemic response in the future
- The CIP continues to be used during subsequent waves of COVID-19 and is now part of a broader, province-wide care pathway in Alberta.