

The Access Improvement Report

July 2021 | Vol 6.2

A Quarterly Newsletter from Alberta Health Services' Access Improvement Team

Since our last *Access Improvement Report* earlier this spring, we've been busy working on a number of enhancements, with a large focus on eReferral updates. Here's our summer snapshot.

Alberta Netcare eReferral Updates

In April, we onboarded Dermatology – Northern Alberta to eReferral Advice Request in the Edmonton, North and Central (North of Red Deer) Zones. Providers who want to submit Advice Requests to Dermatology will be happy to know that we've also increased the size per file you can add to requests from 1 megabyte to 5 megabytes. Users can also attach more than one file per request.

Another eReferral milestone we are pleased to share is that we reached 70,000 submitted eReferral requests in mid-May. In six short months, we went from 60,000 to 70,000 requests and feel this is a big accomplishment considering COVID-19 impacted many of our health processes. Thank you for your support in helping us reach this amazing achievement.

Additionally in May, we added Surgery – General Surgery – Calgary Zone as a new Advice Request facility in the Calgary Zone accepting *colorectal, suspected breast cancer, benign breast tumor, hernia, gallbladder, suspected gastrointestinal cancer and other general surgery issue* reasons for referral. The existing *Breast health issue* Advice Request reason for referral is also available in the Calgary Zone through the Foothills Medical Centre – Women's Health Centre – General Surgery facility. With Calgary Zone now added to the Surgery – General Surgery Advice Request roster, please remember to send eReferral Advice Requests to the appropriate Zone as local specialists are on hand to answer patient-related questions within five calendar days.

Later this month, you'll also notice that a new reason for referral will be added to eReferral Advice Request for two specialties. Dermatology – Northern Alberta will be adding a new paediatric reason for referral – **Paediatric dermatology issue**, and Paediatrics – Community Paediatrics will be adding **Plagiocephaly (headshape) issue** to the Calgary Zone. Both of these specialties also love seeing photos with their Advice Requests, so keep that in mind when submitting yours.

QuRE & Alberta Referral Pathways Updates

QuRE work also continues as we begin ramping up promotion of the [QuRE Patient & Caregiver Journal](#). We hope to share this resource with Primary Care and get it in the hands of patients across the province this fall. We are also working behind the scenes on a few referral pathways (see pg. 2) as part of our Alberta Referral Pathways work that will be released this summer/fall.

Until next time, we appreciate your support and wish you a safe and happy summer.



Get in Touch with Access Improvement

If you have questions, email us at access.ereferral@ahs.ca or call 1-888-733-3755

For information about eReferral, including training support, visit [eReferral online](#)

For more about QuRE and the Alberta Referral Pathways, visit [Access Improvement](#)

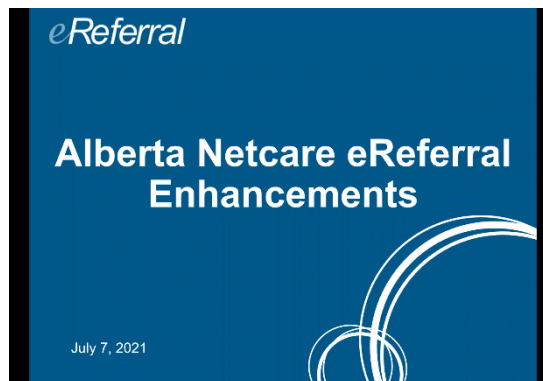
Unsubscribe

If you'd like to unsubscribe from this newsletter, email access.ereferral@ahs.ca

Stay Tuned

The next edition of the *Access Improvement Report* will be released in fall 2021.

Recap: June 2021 eReferral Changes



On June 17, we made a number of eReferral enhancements, and while you may have received a notice about this work through your email, we thought we'd share another highlight just in case you missed it.

All of the enhancements made came from feedback received by eReferral users and are designed to make eReferral easier and more efficient to use. Referring and receiving providers will notice changes on eReferral Provider Notifications, Advice and Consult Request workflows and Advice and Consult Request referral forms. Prior to the June 17 release, we developed an [interactive video](#) to highlight the major changes that were

coming to a screen soon, and have offered six live Zoom webinars to share the changes with users.

To review these changes, please watch our recorded [webinar](#). If you ever need training support, please contact the eHealth Netcare Support Services team at 1-855-643-8649 (Monday – Friday; 8:15 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or email ehhealthsupport@cqi.com. If you have any other eReferral inquiries, please email access.ereferral@ahs.ca or call 1-888-733-3755 (Monday – Friday).

Access Improvement Research Published in the Patient Experience Journal

Members of the Access Improvement team are published authors! Our *Patients' and family caregivers' perceptions of doctor-to-doctor advice and electronic referral notifications in Alberta* article was successfully published in the peer-reviewed *Patient Experience Journal*.

The study looked at the perceptions of more than 1,400 patients and family caregivers in Alberta and their perceptions on doctor-to-doctor advice for non-urgent clinical questions and electronic referral communications. The majority of participants were comfortable with their doctors seeking advice through online messaging systems and through the phone, but about half of the participants did not know if their family doctor had used these advice services in support of their care.

Information used from this study will help promote better person-centred care and will help improve communication during the referral and consultation process.

To read the full article, go [online](#). If you have any questions, please contact Yong Li at yong.li@ahs.ca

eReferral Milestones – How Should We Celebrate?

With eReferral recently reaching 70,000 submitted eReferral requests, we're looking for ideas on how we can celebrate 100,000 requests. Should we get a cake with 100,000 candles? Or, should we get 100,000 balloons? The ideas are endless!

Send us your thoughts about how we should celebrate 100,000 submitted requests to access.ereferral@ahs.ca

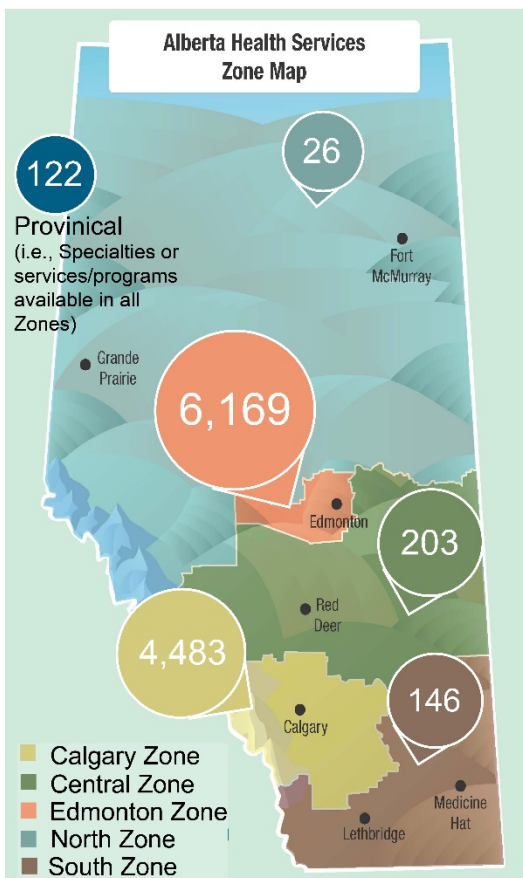
Edmonton Zone Adult GI Referral Pathway Coming Soon!

Exciting news for Edmonton Zone providers who are referring to Adult Gastroenterology. A new referral pathway (i.e., guidelines that tell you how/where to send referrals and labs/diagnostic imaging required) is being finalized and will be released on the Alberta Referral Pathways website this summer/fall.

To see our other pathways, go [online](#).

eReferral Snapshot

Submitted Advice & Consult Requests by Zone



Receiving Specialists

600+



Referring Providers

1,583

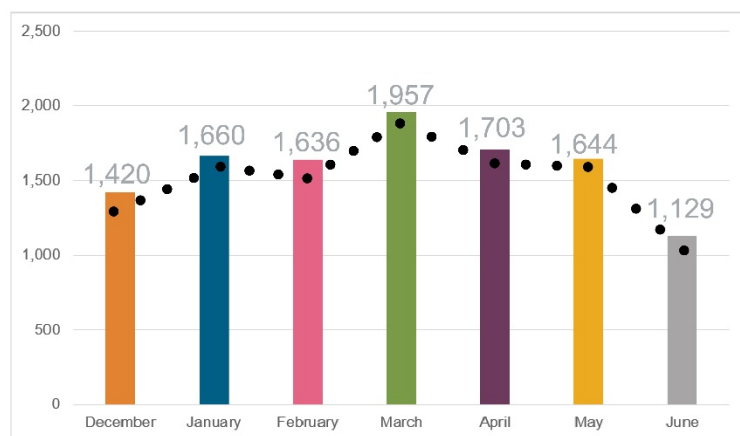
This number excludes Calgary Zone Pulmonary Medicine staff who manually enter faxed referrals into eReferral.



Support Staff

499 Referring

Total Monthly Requests (AR & CR)



181 Advice & Consult Request Reasons for Referral

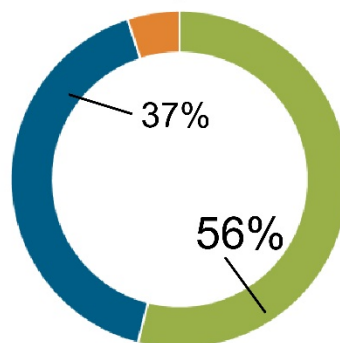
101 Active Advice & Consult Request Facilities

43 Advice Request Specialties to Answer Non-Urgent Clinical Questions

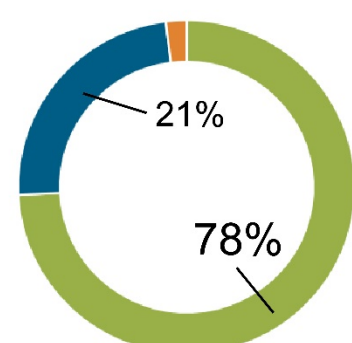
12 Consult Request Services/Programs to Track & Manage In-Person Appointments

Overall Advice Request Outcomes

With Urology



Without Urology



Continue Managing in Community
Referral Required
1% Information Not Provided & 4% Emergent/Urgent Request

Note: Almost 50% of completed Advice Requests included in this chart were completed by Urology

Continue Managing in Community
Referral Required
~1% Information Not Provided or Emergent/Urgent Request

Data period: December 1, 2020 – June 18, 2021

For questions about Access Improvement, email access.ereferral@ahs.ca

NEW! The Specialty Segment

Everyone loves a behind-the-scenes tour, so we thought we'd do a similar version only eReferral style! We're bringing you the new *Specialty Segment* which highlights an Advice or Consult Request specialty, and chats with one of their receiving providers. This quarter, we're chatting with Jennifer Gratrix, Manager, STI Centralized Services, a receiving provider for Internal Med – Infectious Disease – STI Advice Requests.

What are the benefits of using specialty advice for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)?

"Although STIs are the most common notifiable infection in Alberta, some practitioners may not see cases routinely and may benefit from touching base with STI Centralized Services around the latest treatment guidelines, receiving STI medication replacements, partner notification services, and public health reporting requirements. Alberta is experiencing historical high rates of infectious syphilis, including cases among pregnant women resulting in congenital syphilis cases and still births. All syphilis cases need to be managed in conjunction with STI Centralized Services, who will provide practitioners with treatment records and access to Bicillin."

What's something unique about your program?

"The provincial STI program is more than 100 years old and all notifiable STIs are reported to STI Centralized Services under the Public Health Act. Our team reviews all cases to ensure that patients are treated according to the Alberta STI Treatment Guidelines. Partner Notification Nurses, located throughout the province, locate sexual partners of cases and help them access STI testing and treatment. Clinical Development Nurses are available to answer your eReferral Advice Requests."

What type of questions can providers ask as part of their Advice Requests?

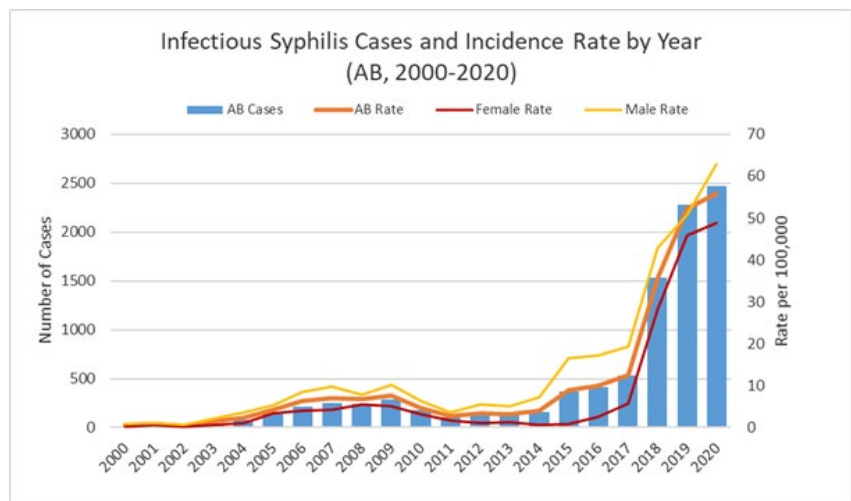
"Questions related to testing, treatment, public health reporting, and partner notification for notifiable STIs are welcome."

As mentioned above, syphilis is on the rise in Alberta. In fact, in July 2019, a provincial outbreak of syphilis was declared with nearly 2,500 cases reported in 2020 impacting all Zones. "Over 130 infants have been diagnosed with congenital syphilis since 2015, including infant deaths; the expected number of cases is 0," says Jennifer.

Aside from using eReferral Advice Request, healthcare providers can access other STI resources, including:

- www.ahs.ca/syphilis - This resource includes posters, a syphilis learning module and a desk-side reference.
- [The Alberta STI Treatment Guidelines](#)
- [Sexually Transmitted Infections Notification form](#)
- [Sexual and Reproductive Health website](#)
- Calling a Clinical Development Nurse – 780-735-1466 or 1-888-535-1466.

Important note: Internal Med – Infectious Disease – STI is available for eReferral Advice Requests province-wide.




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The Rundown with RAAPID North

In a previous edition of the *Access Improvement Report*, we highlighted the specialty advice options available to providers throughout Alberta. While non-urgent specialty advice is available online through eReferral Advice Request, and through phone with Connect MD (Edmonton & North Zones) and Specialist LINK (Calgary Zone), urgent advice is available province-wide through Referral, Access, Advice, Placement, Information & Destination, or RAAPID for short. In this edition, we highlight the important work of RAAPID North and share information on when you can access this amazing resource if you operate anywhere north of Red Deer.

RAAPID North started as a critical care/urgent care telephone line staffed by medical response coordinators with the goal of helping rural sites access medical resources to ensure that their critically ill or injured patient would be moved to tertiary care quickly.

Since 2011, RAAPID North continues to facilitate urgent consultation to stakeholders, but has also branched out and provides medical assistance to any stakeholder that requires service they don't typically have access to. For example, RAAPID North can help facilitate a consult with Otolaryngology or hyperbaric services for the Sturgeon Community Hospital in St. Albert as they do not have these services at this site. They can also provide provincial repatriation services to return patients that came into a higher level of care to their home sites once acute issues have been resolved.



Connecting to Specialty Care
EDMONTON & NORTH ZONE

AVAILABLE FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS AND SPECIALISTS

Non-Urgent Advice

Primary Care Networks ConnectMD

Want to connect with a specialist by phone within two business days?

Call ConnectMD at 1-844-633-2263.
See a list of available specialties at www.pcnconnectmd.com.

USE BILLING CODES:

CALLER OCCURS BETWEEN	SPR	SPECIALISTS
0800 - 1700 (M-Th)	03.01LG	03.01LJ
1700 - 1800 (M-Th)	03.01LK	03.01LK
0800 - 1800 (F)	03.01LG	03.01LJ

Not available evenings, weekends or statutory holidays

A one page transcribed summary of the call will be sent to you afterwards for billing and record keeping purposes.

eReferral

Want to connect with a specialist electronically and receive a response within five calendar days?

Use Alberta Netcare eReferral Advice Request. To see a list of available specialties and submit your questions electronically, go to albertanetcare.ca/ereferral.htm

[USE BILLING CODE 03.01R]

Urgent Advice

RAAPID
Rural Alberta Access Placement Information & Destination

Do you have clinically stable patients with urgent medical conditions who need specialist consultation or transfer?

Call RAAPID (Referral, Access, Advice, Placement, Information & Destination) at 1-800-282-9911.
(AVAILABLE 24/7)

FOR CLINICALLY UNSTABLE PATIENTS, PLEASE CALL 911.

OCTOBER 2020

“One of the other benefits of calling RAAPID is that we can bring on multiple consultants at the same time as transportation options like ground/air ambulances or STARS,” says Sarah Murphy, Assistant Head Nurse. “RAAPID is committed to getting the right patient to the right care at the right time.”

While RAAPID is known for its urgent response capabilities, RAAPID North is reporting that 40 per cent of the calls they receive are non-urgent in nature. To keep RAAPID phone lines open for urgent patient care advice (regardless of where you are in Alberta), we gently remind clinicians to send non-urgent specialty advice requests to non-urgent specialty advice options. To learn more about the options in the Edmonton and North Zones, view this [document](#). For Calgary Zone clinicians, use [Specialist LINK](#) or [eReferral Advice Request](#).

RAAPID is available province-wide, 24/7. For patients north of Red Deer, call RAAPID North at 1-800-282-9911 (Canada only) or 780-735-0811. For patients in and south of Red Deer, call RAAPID South at 1-800-661-1700 (Canada only) or 403-944-4486. For more information about RAAPID, go [online](#).

Who's Who — Access Improvement

Get to know the hardworking team behind eReferral, QuRE and Alberta Referral Pathways with the *Who's Who* employee segment!

This quarter we speak with **Amanda Caldwell**, one of our Senior Consultants.

What do you do on the Access Improvement team?

"I am one of the newest members of the Access Improvement team having joined at the beginning of June. I am the Senior Consultant for the South Zone."

How is your role helping transform Alberta's referral experience?

"I am looking forward to engaging with the specialists and primary care groups to help improve the patient's surgical experience. I am excited to help build on current successes and improve our system through consultation with providers and patients. I will also be working with the QuRE team and am excited to help share this initiative with providers and patients across the province."

What's a fun fact about yourself?

"I am learning to shoot a compound bow at an indoor archery lane. My three kids have been in the 4-H Archery project for the last two years and this year I decided to learn alongside them as they practice."



"I love to go hiking with my husband and three kids. My favourite hikes to do with my family are Ptarmigan Cirque, Blakiston Falls and Dyson Falls."

Have Your Say!

Complete Our Communications Survey Today

Survey fatigue is a real thing and we recognize that you've likely received many survey requests over the past few months. But, surveys are important to understand if we're providing the best value for you. Since we started developing the *Access Improvement Report* in 2015, we wanted to check in to see if the content we share is informative and relevant to you.

To help us deliver the best content we can, please click this [link](#) to help us understand if:

- You are enjoying the content we are developing
- You feel you have a good understand of what the Access Improvement team is working on over the quarter
- You have any suggestions for making this newsletter better

Information used from this survey will help to improve future content. All responses will remain anonymous and will not be shared.

Take a look at the **Alberta Referral Directory** and see how easy making patient referrals to specialty care can be.



Alberta Referral Directory

1-855-889-8899 | ard@ahs.ca | AlbertaReferralDirectory.ca

Do you have a suggestion for the next edition of the *Access Improvement Report*? Email us at access.ereferral@ahs.ca today!



For questions about Access Improvement, email access.ereferral@ahs.ca

*Cover image by: [chi liu](#) on [Unsplash](#)