Providing Local Virtual Access to Emergency Services

**Challenge**

Emergency departments in Ontario have seen significant reductions in utilization since the pandemic began and there are fewer patients presenting with serious issues including heart attack and stroke. People who should be seeking care are not, likely due to fear of acquiring COVID-19.

**Opportunity**

There is an opportunity to use a virtual approach to support patient-initiated requests for clinical assessment on demand. Virtual models of care can assist in providing access to assessment, providing self-care advice, and directing patients to the appropriate care setting.

**Benefits**

- Improves access to care
- Helps patients make best choices for their health needs
- Uses health system resources appropriately
- Provides more convenient care with minimal disruption to the patient/family members

**Virtual Triage Options**

- **Direct contact**
  - Physician assesses all patients virtually (by telephone or video).

- **Triage model**
  - A nurse virtually triages the patient request to the appropriate level. eCTAS could be used.

- **Fully automated**
  - A chatbot (or similar)/digital clinical algorithms triage the patient before a clinician is involved.

**Virtual Visit Model**

The patient is placed in a queue to virtually visit with the next available physician or is sent a scheduled time for the video or audio call.

**Ontario-Based Examples**

- **CHEO**
  - CHEO becomes Canada’s first pediatric hospital offering a virtual Emergency Department
  - [Click to Learn More]

- **Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre**
  - [Click to Learn More]

**International Examples**

- **eCTAS**
  - Electronic Canadian Triage Acuity Scale
  - Ontario hospitals have implemented the provincial Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) eCTAS tool to accurately triage patients. It has been shown to improve the accuracy and consistency of patient triage and could be utilized in a pre-hospital context including a virtual model of care that promotes access to on-demand services.

**Ontario Health OTN**

For assistance, please contact us at info@otn.ca