

primary cares

News & updates from the Calgary Zone



Alcohol use disorder pathway

A [new Calgary Zone pathway](#) has been developed to support physicians and nurse practitioners to identify and manage [alcohol use disorder](#) in primary care.

Developed as part of a collaboration between family medicine, hepatology, addictions medicine and other primary and specialty care providers, it is designed to help identify at-risk patients, indicate what investigations are recommended, provide pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments or supports, and determine when specialty care might be needed.

[Download the pathway.](#)

Webinar: The new pathway is the focus of the next webinar in the Calgary Zone's popular series, which returns next month. On Monday, October 16, from 6–8 p.m., Dr. Monty Ghosh will join co-hosts Dr. Rick Ward and Dr. Christine Luelo to discuss the pharmacological management options highlighted in the pathway. [Register.](#)

Specialist Link passes 100,000 calls!

The Calgary Zone's popular [Specialist Link](#) tele-advice service reached an important milestone recently when it passed 100,000 calls.

Launched in 2014, the provider-only service supports family physicians and nurse practitioners to care for their patients by connecting them in real time with specialists and other experts. This summer, Specialist Link celebrated its 100,000th call. As of Wednesday, September 27, it had facilitated more than 105,000 calls in total since 2014.

“Specialist Link tele-advice is a vital service that family physicians in the Calgary area have come to rely on in their daily practice,” said Dr. Niki Panich, co-chair of the specialty integration task group that oversees the service, which is a partnership between Alberta Health Services and the seven Calgary and area Primary Care Networks.

“Passing 100,000 calls is an incredible milestone that is a testament to the spirit of collaboration between specialty and primary care, which has helped support physicians, reduce unnecessary or inappropriate referrals, enhance access and ultimately improve patient care.”

The very first tele-advice phone line available via Specialist Link offered gastroenterology advice. Family doctors immediately started seeing the benefits of collaborating with a specialist to confirm treatment plans. Services quickly expanded and Specialist Link continues to grow and add new specialties. Today, 50 tele-advice services are available to providers in the Calgary Zone. The website also offers [clinical care pathways](#) and other [resources](#) that support providers to care for their patients. Requesting tele-advice is simple: Simply go to specialistlink.ca, request a service and expect a call back within one hour.

“I’d like to say a big thank you to the specialty groups that have worked with us to offer telephone advice. We recently upgraded to a digital phone system and continue to improve the service, both for the specialists hosting the calls and the family doctors and nurse practitioners requesting them,” said program manager Yolanda Martens-Vanhilst, the lead for Specialist Link.

[More information.](#)

Immunization campaign

This year’s immunization campaign will kick off on Tuesday, October 10, when Albertans will be able to start booking appointments for influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.

Appointments at AHS clinics and pharmacies can be made through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#). The first appointments will be available starting Monday, October 16. It is anticipated that XBB COVID-19 vaccine formulations will be available in the coming weeks.

Albertans living in congregate care will be able to access vaccines starting Monday, October 2.

[More information.](#)

Virtual care, good faith statement

Minister of Health Adriana LaGrange made announcements on several items at the recent Alberta Medical Association Representative Forum. They included:

- Amendments to virtual care codes
- Good faith claims (same submission process as pre-2020)
- Changes to reduce burden re authorization processes for prescription renewals

[More information.](#)

Quick links

Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) conference

On Saturday, November 4, the Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) hosts a

conference at the University of Calgary. The conference is in-person but also has a post-event access to recordings option. [More information](#).

Revised Expected Death in the Home Care Setting form

Updates have been made to the Expected Death in the Home Care Setting (EDITH) form. [More information](#).