

Rural Emergency Department Sustainability & Virtual Care

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Land Acknowledgement

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dǎkelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, syilx, and T̓shilqot'in Nations where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.



Emerging Solutions

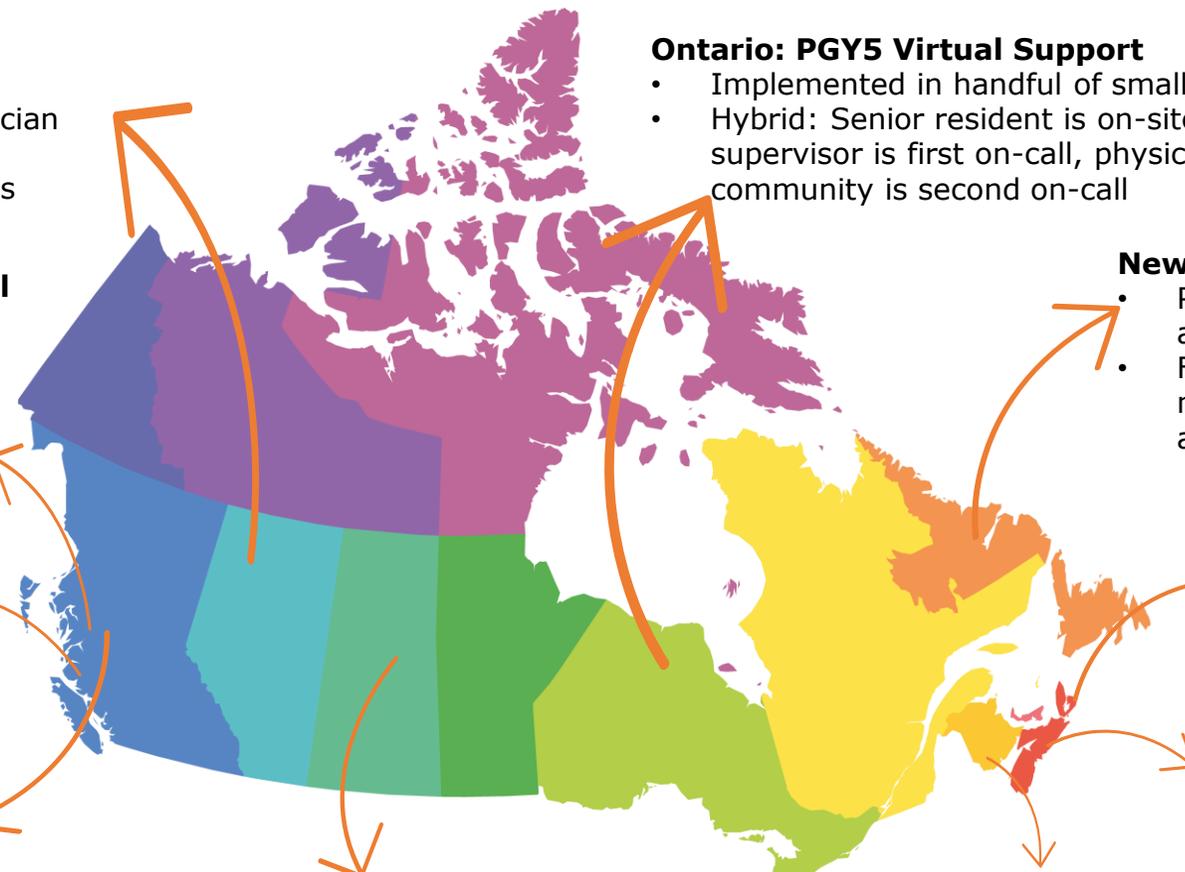
- Rural recruitment incentives
- Practice Ready Assessment BC (PRA-BC) program
- UBC International Medical Graduate (IMG) Program
- Virtual care programs:
 - In-patient virtual support at Cariboo Memorial Hospital
 - Virtual Emergency Room Rural assistance (VEERa)



Cariboo Memorial Hospital in Williams Lake was the first hospital in B.C. to add virtual care in the in-patient unit in Nov. 2024.



Hybrid Virtual Care in Canada



Alberta Health Services: Virtual Emergency Physician

- Fully virtual, 24/7 virtual physician support to 5 rural EDs
- Regional pool of AHS physicians

Ontario: PGY5 Virtual Support

- Implemented in handful of small rural sites
- Hybrid: Senior resident is on-site, virtual supervisor is first on-call, physician within community is second on-call

Newfoundland & Labrador – Virtual ER Services

- Provincial pool of physicians + Teladoc physicians as back up
- Fully virtual with support from emerg-trained nurses, transfers high-acuity patients where appropriate to tertiary sites

British Columbia: Cariboo Memorial Hospital (Williams Lake)

- Local hospital – inpatient unit
- Hybrid: Virtual physician (Teladoc recruited) and in-person physician

British Columbia - RCCbc VERRa

- Provincial – support ED in rural/remote and small sites
- Hybrid:
 - Virtual physician (RCCbc recruited) - non-urgent to emergent
 - On-site Physician – life & limb

British Columbia – Fraser Health Eagle Ridge Hospital

- Local hospital
- Hybrid: Virtual hospitalist (from same hospital) - existing, stable inpatient and covers all "ward calls" during evening

Saskatchewan – Central Virtual Physician Emergency Room (VPER)

- Provincial pool of physicians
- Fully virtual, including higher acuity patients

New Brunswick: Horizon Health Network

- Supports 2 EDs
- Hybrid: Virtual physician (Teladoc recruited) and in-person physician

Prince Edward Island - Virtual MRP inpatient care model

- Western Hospital
- Hybrid: Cover unattached patients admitted and consent to virtual care

Nova Scotia – Virtual EmergencyNS

- Yarmouth Regional Hospital - ED
- On-Site Hybrid:
 - Virtual physician – low acuity patient
 - On-site physician – high acuity patients



Overview of Overnight Emergency Services

Lillooet, Dr. Helmken, Arrow Lakes and Princeton Hospitals
 Data collected from Aug. 1, 2024, to Aug. 15, 2025, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Hospital	Total overnight visits	Daily overnight visits
Lillooet Hospital	990	2.8
Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital (Clearwater)	793	2.2
Arrow Lakes Hospital (Nakusp)	603	1.7
Princeton General Hospital	958	2.7

Table: Overnight volume breakdown by hospital

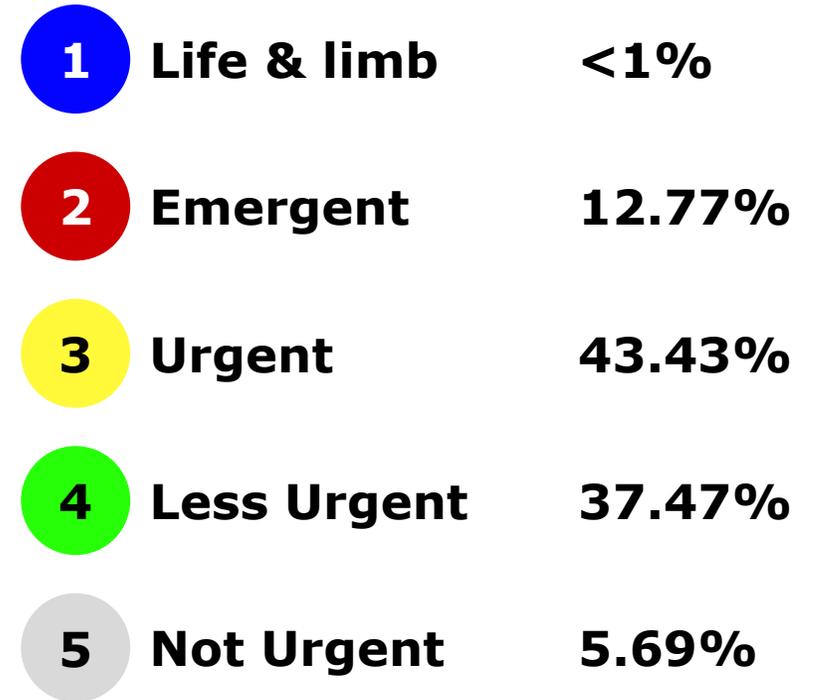
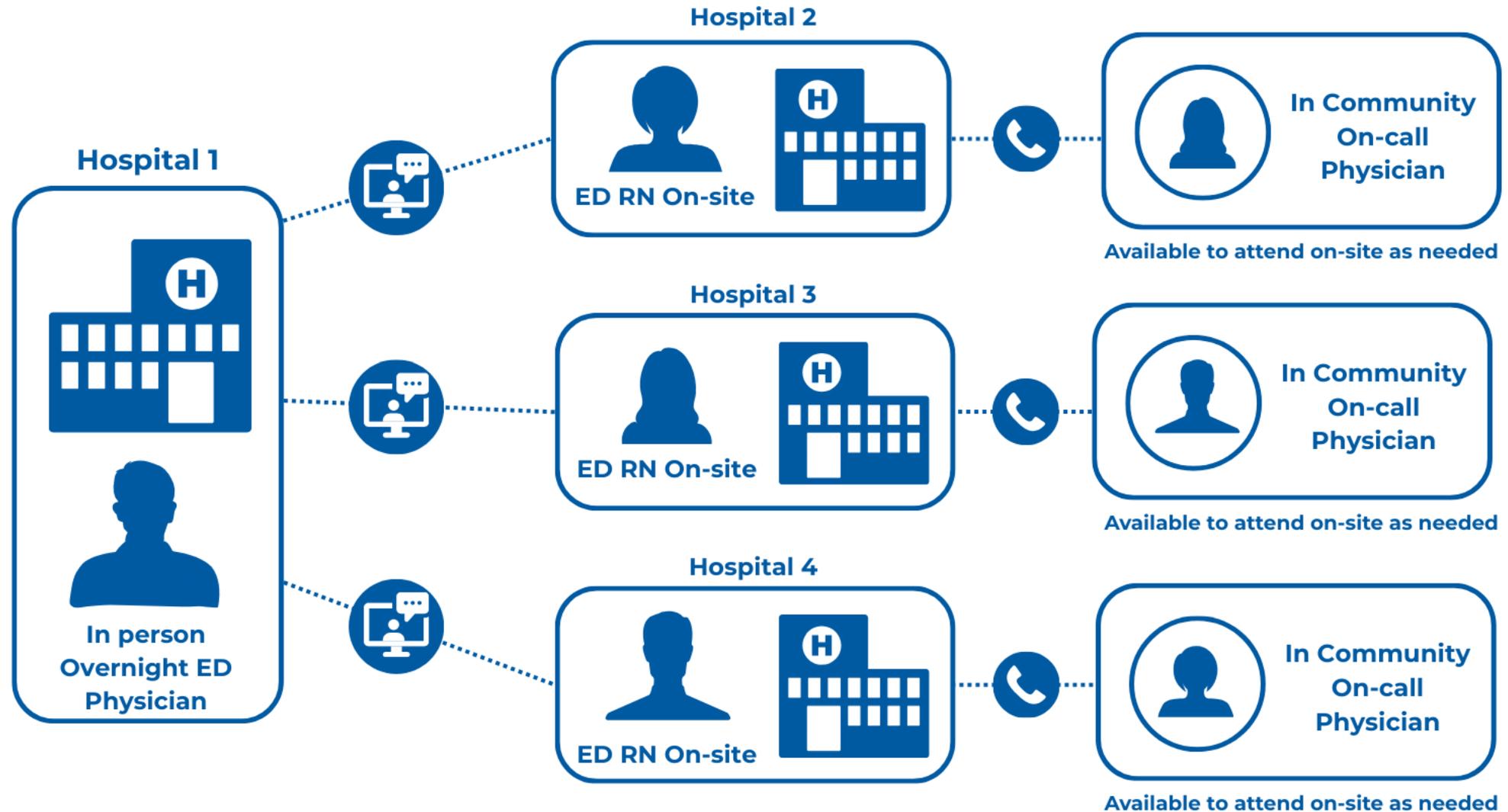


Figure: Average level of acuity in four pilot hospitals



Proposed Overnight Hybrid Emergency Service Model

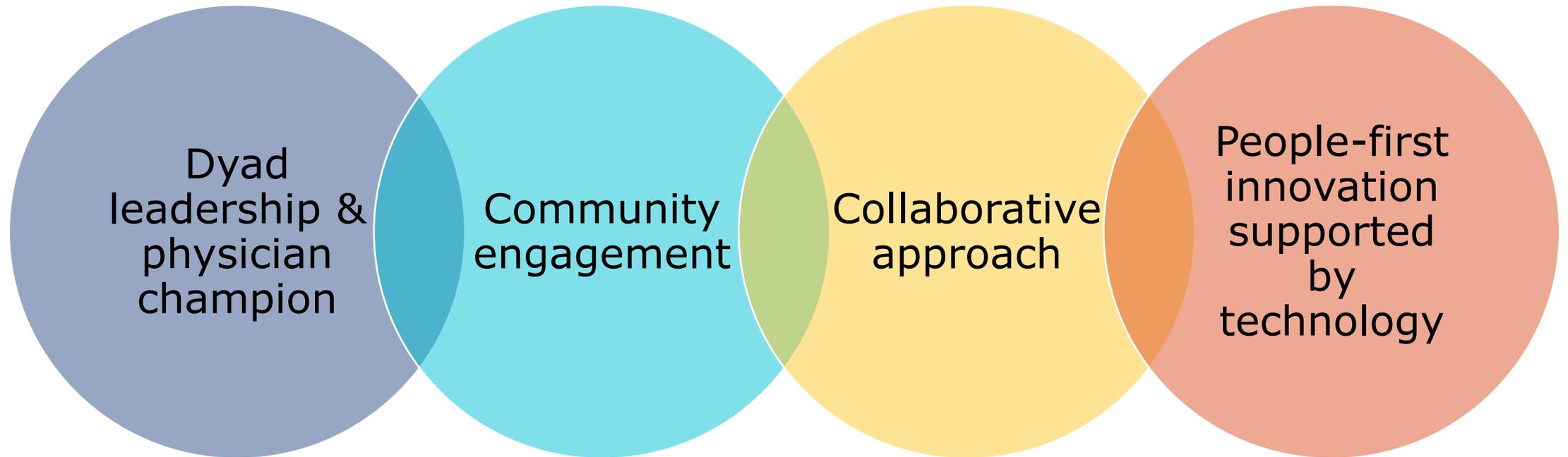


Current State

- Soft-launch support in place:
 - Care team engagement and training
 - Community of Practice
 - Digital Health systems
- Ongoing local engagement and collaboration
- Continuous evaluation



Collaboration & Innovation Driving Change

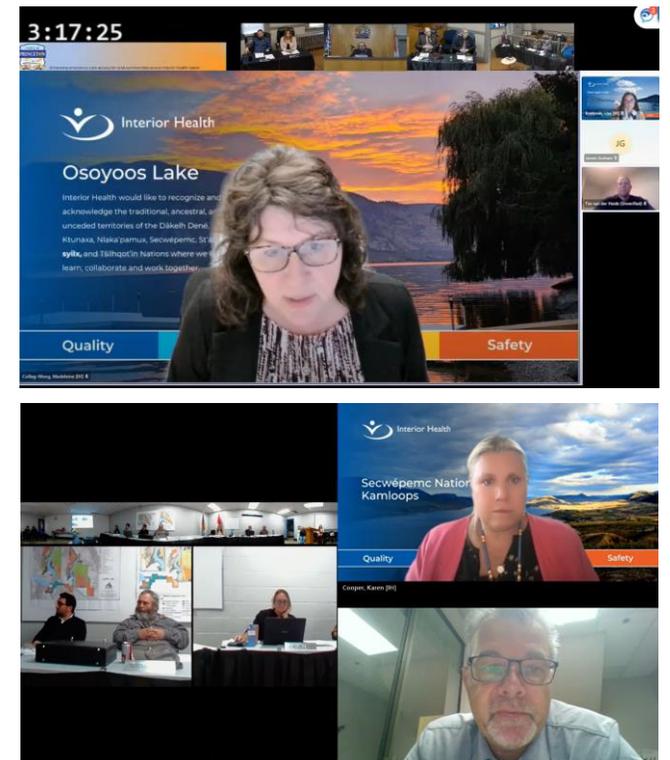


What communities are saying

"Our community welcomes innovative solutions, values the strong partnerships that support rural health care and appreciates the leadership from the Ministry of Health and Interior Health."

"This is a new bright idea to try to ease the pressure on the doctors and get some quality of life back for a whole bunch of people in the medical system."

Desire to see the evaluation results and patient-focused stories.



Conclusion



Invest in standardization now for system resilience in the future.

