

# Surgical and Endoscopy Central Intake Q&A

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Central is launching Centralized Intake for Surgery and Endoscopic Referrals. This will be done in a phased approach beginning April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

## **Q: What pathway will be the first to move to Centralized Intake?**

- All referrals for gallbladders and hernias will be sent to the Central Intake starting April 1<sup>st</sup>
- The next pathway to follow will be all Endoscopy Referrals
- Subsequent pathways will be announced in the future

## **Q: Who can refer to the Surgical and Endoscopy Central Intake?**

- Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

## **Q: How does Primary Care refer to the Surgical and Endoscopy?**

- A standardized referral form with a NEW Centralized fax line will be provided just prior to April 1<sup>st</sup>

## **Q: What is the rationale to moving to a Centralized Intake model of Care?**

- Centralized Intake for surgical and endoscopy services will enable better recovery from COVID-19.
- The technologies required to address the needs above are well established within the Ontario; healthcare system and have demonstrated success in reducing wait-times, reducing lost or duplicate referrals, engaging primary care providers and patients in the referral process, and providing data to support ethical decision- making around allocation of finite resources; and
- Central Intake has been shown to reduce Wait Times by **28%** - it is the business model used by Walmart, West Jet and Air Canada for more efficient throughput;

## **Q: What are some of the existing challenges we hope to address with Centralized Intake?**

At the moment, patient referrals reside in each surgeon's office. This creates an imbalance in a couple key ways:

- Case volume varies widely, one surgeon may have procedure time to spare while other surgeons are drowning under a huge referral volume;
- Triage procedures varies greatly. The ability of the most urgent patients to receive treatment in a timely manner depends on consistent and timely triaging; and
- With those factors combined, OR/Endo Procedure time may not be utilized for the proper patients at a community level. While one surgeon is clearing their list weekly (including non-urgent cases), another has a massive back log with urgent patients waiting too long.

**Q: What does the Surgical/Endo Central Intake and Assessment do?**

Incoming referrals for patients requiring advanced levels of care are checked for completeness and the patient may be booked with a Nurse Practitioner for assessment or the referral may be electronically routed directly to a Surgeon, Endoscopist or our Diagnostic Assessment Program (ENDO DAP).

**Q: What are other Key Benefits of Centralized Intake?**

- Improved access to care with more equitable wait times for consultation and surgery;
- Provision of care that is coordinated, and integrated with primary care, to ensure patient's receive the right care from the right providers; at the right time and in the right amount;
- One point of contact for referrals through centralized intake;
- Associated with high satisfaction amongst participating providers; and
- Increased patient satisfaction.

**Q: What are other longer term benefits that we can expect?**

Our team is working closely with the Ontario eServices Program to enable electronic referral (eReferral) throughout the province. As part of the program, OCEAN eReferral is a provincially funded technology that electronically transfers patient information in a secure and seamless manner from one point-of-care system into another.

eReferral is intended to replace fax and telephone referral options. Ocean eReferral helps to reduce patient wait times and improve efficiency of transitions in care. Three of the most common EMRs (TELUS PS Suite® EMR, Accuro® EMR and OSCAR EMRs) are integrated with the OCEAN eReferral platform. It can also be utilized as a web-based tool for agencies on a different system or those using paper charts.

<https://www.oceanereferralnetwork.ca/about>

As part of the ongoing work with the Ontario eServices Program, an integration between Ocean eReferral and Novari eRequest is currently underway. Upon completion of the integration, Ocean will seamlessly communicate with Novari eRequest and allow for direct communication with Central Intake.

**eReferral Benefits:**

1. Reduces patient wait time by ensuring sent referrals are complete
2. Reduces inappropriate referrals by inclusion of best practice guidelines
3. Equalizes access to specialized care for patient's regardless of geography or demographics
4. Reduces risk of lost, misdirected, or illegible faxes
5. Provides senders with access to wait time data / health care service
6. Provides user updates and an awareness of status of sent referrals
7. Provides secure communication channel between providers connected to patient care
8. Patient email enables patients ability to get information re: referral as well as appointment information and reminders
9. Minimal change to current processes with significant improvements for patients
10. Enables providers to be compliant with CPSO guidelines related to "transitions in care"



We recognize the challenges with change management and request your support as we transition to a more patient-centric, evidence-based solution which will improve access to care and health system efficiencies. For more information on how to get started using eReferral in your primary care practice, email Linda Watts at [linda.watts@lhins.on.ca](mailto:linda.watts@lhins.on.ca) or Wendy Smith at [wendy.smith@lhins.on.ca](mailto:wendy.smith@lhins.on.ca).

**Please provide us with your ideas to improve the program and its services.** These can be e-mailed to Caroline Fanti: [fantic@tbh.net](mailto:fantic@tbh.net). Please know that ongoing feedback is always welcome.