

Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

Virtual Care Partnership Program



The challenge

Rural First Nations communities in North Vancouver Island, British Columbia, experience long wait times to access team-based primary care. This leads to an increased reliance on emergency departments (EDs) as the primary access point for healthcare.

The promising practice

Integrate a virtual care visit platform (BC Virtual Visit) within two primary care centres, to enable:

- Patients to obtain appointments to see members of a team of primary care providers virtually the same-day as requested, or the next-day. This is made possible by reserving 2-hours of appointments for same-day/next-day appointments across 6 providers (or half-day a week per family physician).
- Providers to provide in-person care using virtual technologies to better meet patient needs, for example, a virtual real-time interpreter service.

Example impacts

More people have same-day/next-day access to virtual care.

- Opening three to six virtual care appointments per day in two North Vancouver Island primary care centres.
- Doubled the number of same-day/next-day appointments for in-person or virtual care per provider.

Providers can more efficiently meet the needs of patients.

- Through providing different options for accessing care – video, phone, or in-person.
- Ensuring more patients can access primary care when appropriate.

Enabling flexible work options for providers working in rural communities.

- Allowing providers the option to provide care virtually, from their homes, alternate facilities, and communities, when appropriate. Supporting work-life balance for primary care providers.

“Providing virtual care with this platform has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. It has allowed me to connect with patients more conveniently, ensuring they receive timely care.”

- North Vancouver Island physician



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Keys to success

- **Funding:** \$2,500 for community engagement and administration. No additional funding required to use the BC Virtual Visit Platform (free for health authorities in BC).
- **Champions** to set up, maintain, and provide scheduling and technical support of the virtual platform.
- **Providers** who are engaged, enthusiastic, and effectively supported to use the virtual care platform and resources.
- **Meaningful partnerships** with communities to monitor and share what's working well, what could be better, and ways to improve over time to better enable safe and high-quality healthcare.

Lessons learned

- Seek guidance from local communities and providers on how best to use virtual care to meet their needs.
- Collaborate with the primary care team on how to best implement virtual care into practice.
- Share information to promote awareness, impact, and patient/provider uptake. For example, posters with information on how to access virtual care services have been placed in ED reception areas.

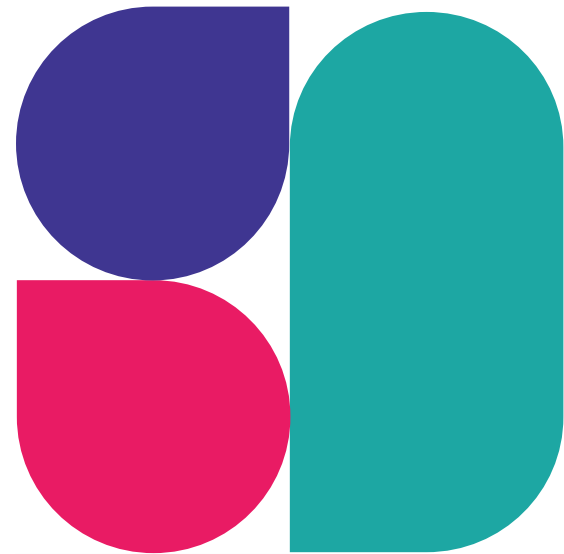
How can I learn more?

Contact the organization.

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Why was this summary created?

Vancouver Island Health Authority participated in Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program. SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care.

This promising practice summary was co-produced with Vancouver Island Health Authority to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.