

Improving the Patient and Provider Experience: Hospital Diagnostic Imaging Live on eReferral in Waterloo Wellington

Waterloo, ON – Wednesday, April 4, 2018 -- Last week, all seven hospitals in the Waterloo Wellington region took a significant step in improving the patient experience by introducing an electronic referral (eReferral) solution as a way to process Diagnostic Imaging (DI) referrals. This use of technology will not only streamline the referral process for family physicians, specialists and DI hospital staff, it will also decrease administrative delays for patients in need of X-rays, MRIs, CTs or other diagnostic imaging tests.

“The eReferral solution puts more control in the hands of patients and their caregivers,” said Kim Brenner, a member of the Waterloo Wellington System Coordinated Access (WW SCA) project’s Patient and Caregiver Working Group. “I’m no longer in the dark when it comes to the status of my referral.”

The Patient and Caregiver Working Group was established to improve patient and caregiver experiences when accessing publicly funded specialists and specialty programs across the health care continuum.

Until now, patients could wait weeks to be notified of their Diagnostic Imaging appointment time. The eReferral solution gives patients the option of being notified by email throughout the appointment booking process. The patient can also now confirm his or her appointment directly from their email. In addition, this real-time communication ensures that patients have all the relevant information at their fingertips, including how to prepare for the test and where to park.

The eReferral solution allows patients to choose their referral by location and work is underway to include wait time as a factor for patients’ consideration in the future. For example, Harold Miller, a 50-year-old man suffering from severe knee pain, will have the ability to decide whether he’d prefer his appointment be booked based on proximity to his home, or shortest wait time.

“What we’ve heard from our Patient and Caregiver Working Group is that patients want to be able to choose the location of their referral based on location and/or wait times. In some cases, they would prefer to have an appointment closer to home while other times they would be willing to travel further to be seen sooner,” said Danielle Olivier, Project Manager, Waterloo Wellington System Coordinated Access Program.

The Diagnostic Imaging Integrated Program Council (DIIPC), in partnership with the System Coordinated Access Program are proud to champion this technology as a commitment to continually improving patient care throughout Waterloo Wellington.

“This was a collaborative effort and would not have been possible without the active role played by our community,” said Dr. Mohamed Alarakhia, Director, eHealth Centre of Excellence.

As a leader in this space and a champion for this initiative, Cambridge Memorial Hospital identified their need for this technology and implemented this eReferral solution in November 2015. Their experience working with eReferral has provided valuable insights to the region-wide launch.

“The new eReferral system is a simple improvement in the process. By making referrals faster to process and reducing the likelihood of incomplete referrals, we can improve access and ensure our patients are getting the services they need,” said Dr. Winnie Lee, Chief of Diagnostic Imaging, Deputy Chief of Staff, and project lead radiologist at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

“Since we started using eReferrals, our staff has noticed much less back-and-forth is needed with both the patient and the hospital,” said Deb Hedges, program administrator at Two Rivers Family Health Team. “Ultimately, it’s helping us to improve the patient experience while reducing administrative overhead.”

In addition to DI, eReferrals can also be made to Diabetes, Orthopedics and Chronic Disease Prevention Management in the Waterloo Wellington region. The launch of eReferral in Waterloo Wellington is streamlining the referral process and improving communication for everyone involved.

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About the System Coordinated Access Program

The System Coordinated Access Program, hosted by the eHealth Centre of Excellence in Waterloo Wellington supports the development and adoption of coordinated access and eReferral in multiple Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) across the province.

The System Coordinated Access Program has partnered with a consortium who has developed a technical solution to facilitate eReferral in LHINs throughout Ontario including Waterloo Wellington, Champlain, Erie St. Clair, South East and North East.

The Ontario-based consortium consists of Think Research, CognisantMD and the Centre for Effective Practice. CognisantMD’s Ocean eReferral Network and Think Research’s EntryPoint platform form the basis of the eReferral technology.

The Program is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and supported by the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network.

systemcoordinatedaccess.ca

About eHealth Centre of Excellence

The eHealth Centre of Excellence was established in 2014 with the vision of creating a collaborative space to share knowledge, develop best practices, and enable the deployment of digital health tools across the healthcare continuum. Drawing from our network of clinicians, change management specialists, technical and privacy experts, researchers, project management, and healthcare strategy and alignment experts, we support healthcare providers to adopt innovative information technologies that will enhance their clinical and organizational workflows, with the ultimate goal of improving patient outcomes. For more information, visit ehealthce.ca.



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