



eReferral Solution

The electronic referral (eReferral) solution is enhancing the efficiency and completeness of referrals sent from primary care to Diabetes Education Programs in the Waterloo Wellington LHIN.

Background

Diabetes is a complex chronic disease that affects approximately 9.8% of the Canadian population (1). The Canadian Diabetes Association's 2013 Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) introduced a new clinical-based paradigm to the management of diabetes (2). For optimal diabetes management, self-management remedial education is considered a fundamental part of the model of care (2). Self-management programs actively involve patients in their own clinical care. These programs are designed to educate patients and caregivers on diabetes, as well as the impact they have on a patient's emotional and physical well-being (2).

There are approximately 331 diabetes self-management education programs distributed across Ontario (3). The Waterloo Wellington region supports 12 Diabetes Education Programs (DEP) at various outreach sites (4). Patients can be referred to these programs by primary care providers or by self-referring through the Diabetes Central Intake website (4).

Despite the proven benefits and the availability of DEP, educational program resources and services in Canada are still being under-utilized (3). Research findings report that only 20 to 30% of patients diagnosed with diabetes are attending a DEP in Ontario (3,5) and those who do not attend are usually older, low income, recent immigrants, have mental health issues or other comorbidities (3). Evidence shows that long waiting lists, unsuitability of offered times, long referral processes, language barriers and inconvenient locations were among the top obstacles that deterred patients from attending a DEP, and PCPs from referring patients to DEPs (6).

In August 2017, the eReferral solution was implemented for diabetes in the WWLHIN as a way to improve the referral process to DEP. The eReferral solution facilitates a systematic, comprehensive referral process that captures relevant information resulting in more complete referrals, and supporting the weighty administrative work enabling quicker access to DEP. This ensures a fast and easy connection to patients with regard to their referral.



Langs Diabetes Education Program Staff
(Pieter Agema, Jennifer MacAulay,
Anka Brozic and Kim Busato)

“Our DEP staff find the eReferrals easy to work with. They are much more complete and legible. A real bonus is the fact that we can send patients forms and other info regarding their upcoming appointments easily and securely. All of these things have helped us to communicate more easily with providers and patients, and to be more efficient. It would be great if all of our referrals were eReferrals!”

Anka Brozic, Director, Langs DEP

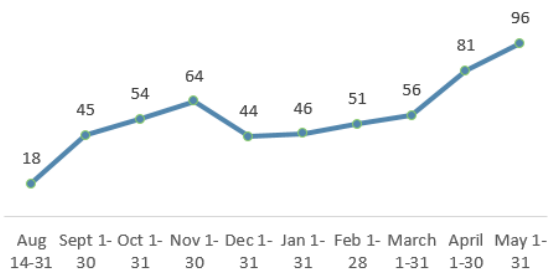
Benefits

Since the implementation of the Ocean eReferral solution in August 2017, there has been a steady growth in the adoption of the system. To date, 59 healthcare providers have sent over 500 eReferrals for DEP, 44 patients with diabetes have filed for electronic self-referrals, and 25 organizations are accepting eReferrals for this service within the WWLHIN. Approximately, three-quarters of these eReferrals have been booked or completed with a mean wait time of 26 days. Moreover, half of the patients with booked appointments received an automated email notification of their scheduled appointments.

Langs Community Health Centre DEP has reported adequate satisfaction with the electronic referral process. The diabetes education staff have reported experiencing promising efficiencies in their workflow when using the eReferral system. Electronic referrals are processed 50 to 100% faster than traditional paper-fax referrals. With eReferrals, there has been an increase in the number of complete, clear, clean, and more legible referral forms. The eReferral system ensures that all essential data is included on the form, saving time for administrative staff and Central Intake who are no longer required to track down missing information. In addition, eReferrals decrease the time needed to book and notify patients of appointments. As part of eReferral, receiving the details of their scheduled appointments is quick and easy for patients registered to receive automated email notifications. Greater usage of the eReferral system and further benefits would be boosted when eReferrals further expand to for all EMR systems.



Monthly DEP eReferrals in WWLHIN



	Paper-based (Time to Process)	eReferral (Time to Process)
Urgent	1 - 2 days	0 - 2 days
Semi-urgent	1 - 5 days	0 - 2 days
Non-urgent	1 - 14 days	0 - 5 days

About the SCA Program

The System Coordinated Access (SCA) Program was originally initiated to support the development and adoption of electronic referral in the Waterloo Wellington region. As a result of an investment by the Ontario Government, the program, in collaboration with the Think Research Consortium (Think Research, CognisantMD and Centre for Effective Practice), has now expanded to support the implementation of eReferral to four additional LHINs.

eReferral replaces paper-based faxes with electronic referrals. Using integrated electronic medical records, referrals are sent, tracked and updated right from the patient's electronic chart. The local SCA deployment teams provide training, solution set-up and support.

Works Cited

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