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B.C.'S MINISTRY OF HEALTH



UPCCs – The first 5 celebrate their first year

Urgent and Primary Care Centres (UPCCs) serve a key function in our primary care system, providing patients with better access to same-day, urgent, and non-emergency health care – including in the evenings and on weekends. In some areas they also provide access and attachment to long-term primary care for people who do not have a regular primary care provider (a family physician or nurse practitioner).

UPCCs are full-service clinics and act as an alternative to visiting the hospital for issues that do not require emergency care, or if a patient is unable to get a timely appointment with their primary care provider for an urgent concern. Anyone requiring medical attention within 24 hours for conditions such as sprains or minor cuts and burns can get the care they need at their local UPCC.

UPCCs are made up of team-based primary care delivered by family doctors, nurse practitioners, and a team of nursing and allied providers. Collaboratively, these teams of providers are working together to meet the primary care needs of patients.

With 14 UPCCs announced through B.C. under the government's [Primary Care Strategy](#), and more to come, the first five UPCCs to launch – one from each health authority region – marked their one-year anniversaries recently.

1. [Kamloops Urgent Primary Care Centre](#)
2. [North Surrey Urgent Primary Care Centre](#)
3. [Westshore Urgent Primary Care Centre](#)
4. [Quesnel Urgent Primary Care Centre](#)
5. [Vancouver City Centre Urgent Primary Care Centre](#)

Within their first year of operations, these five have collectively seen over 70,000 patient visits. As of October 16, 2019:

- Kamloops UPCC saw **10,230** patient visits
- North Surrey UPCC saw **18,837** patient visits
- Quesnel UPCC saw **2,983** patient visits



The first anniversary celebration of the Kamloops Urgent Primary Care & Learning Centre.



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- Westshore UPCC saw **22,050** patient visits
- Vancouver City Centre saw **12,136** patient visits

The number of patient visits tells us more patients are getting access to the care they need, but these numbers don't paint the full picture. For example, the Westshore UPCC is also home to a mental health and substance use clinic. The Central Access and Rapid Engagement Services (CARES) Clinic has provided over 500 individuals with counselling services - and all requests for same day access have been accepted and clients seen within one day.

Attachment through UPCCs

In some UPCCs, the communities they serve have a low unattachment rate – people who do not have a regular primary care provider - and the focus is more on ensuring people can get the care they need *when* they need it. For other communities where there is a large population of people who are unattached, UPCCs help fill that gap. The data shows that this is happening – for the first five sites, 35 percent of patients who visited were considered attached and 65 percent unattached.



Premier John Horgan at the launch of the North Surrey Urgent Primary Care Centre in June 2018.

UPCCs have multiple ways of supporting patients to become attached to a primary care provider within their community. UPCCs are the first door patients can enter for access to primary care services and the goal is for them to act as a hub to support patient attachment to ongoing primary care providers as capacity becomes available. Through [Primary Care Networks](#), additional resources are being added to communities to increase attachment capacity as a part of BC's broader primary care strategy.

In the first year, 2,051 patients were attached to new providers across the first five UPCCs (data up to October 16). In addition, over 500 attachments have been facilitated to other community practices through the local

UPCC attachment protocols. And, UPCCs have provided thousands of patients with information on how to be added to waitlists and which practices in their community are accepting new patients.

In Surrey, for example, one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, there are approximately 78,000 unattached residents. The North Surrey UPCC offers residents an option to receive long-term primary care by attaching them to a regular primary care provider. At the same time, the UPCC also supports physician practices in the community by offering them a place to refer patients when their own daily appointment schedule is fully booked.

One physician in Quesnel put it best when they shared that commented on an additional service benefit of the UPCC is providing a needed service, adding, "The UPCC allows patients with a very busy work schedule to see a GP after hours and on weekends to discuss primary health care needs".

Taking the pressures off emergency rooms

One of the reasons UPCCs were designed was to divert patients away from the emergency room for conditions that are not considered to be life-threatening, but which need medical attention within 12-24 hours (levels 4 (less urgent) and 5 (non urgent) on the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS)). UPCCs give patients an alternative option to accessing care when they do not need emergency care, and either do not have a primary care provider or cannot get in to see their regular provider in a timely way.

Some highlights include:

- In Kamloops, **90 percent of visits** were considered urgent (CTAS 4/5) and to be seen within 24 to 48 hours.
- In Surrey, **45 percent of visits** were considered urgent walk-ins and 286 patients (or 1.5 percent of all visits) have been sent directly from the UPCC to the emergency department, because they were more acute than should be appropriately seen at the UPCC (for example heart attacks, head injury where CT was required, etc.).
- In Quesnel, **45 percent of visits** were considered urgent and 59 patients were sent to the emergency department.
- In the Westshore, **69 percent of visits** were classified as CTAS 4, while 11 percent were CTAS 5 – both of which meet the target patient population.
- Similarly, in Vancouver City Centre, **69 percent of visits** were classified as CTAS 4 and **20 percent of visits** were classified as CTAS 5.



Health Minister Adrian Dix at the announcement of the Quesnel Urgent Primary Care Centre.

While these numbers represent a snapshot of a specific moment in time, this information serves as an important baseline as UPCCs grow in their communities and are integrated into primary care networks. By looking at what type of patients visited the UPCC, we can get a better picture of how the UPCC is being used, if it is meeting its intended goals and the needs of the population it serves, and how it could be more effectively leveraged – especially as the Province works to establish additional UPCCs.

Over this first year, each UPCC has learned and continued to grow to meet the needs of their communities, and this information will help to further refine how care is delivered and how patients are served.

Community response

The response from patients has been well received. A Vancouver City Centre UPCC patient described their overall experience as positive. “I hadn’t heard of the UPCC prior to my visit (my sister who works at St. Paul’s recommended we go there) but since my visit, I have told everyone about it. The staff were kind,

patient and helpful. There was virtually no wait time and we received the highest degree of care and attention”.

Providers too are weighing in. Pharmacist Elain Wong in North Surrey said, “I tend to see the most complex patients and receive a lot of positive feedback regarding the quality of care. Most patients would say they’ve never experienced such high-quality care and would recommend us to their friends. It’s great that we have many different providers including pharmacists, nurses, social workers, etc.”

Did you know?

Initially, Urgent *and* Primary Care Centres were called ‘urgent primary care centres’ until the policy directive was updated to include attaching patients to physicians and nurse practitioners, while continuing to provide services evening and weekends. To learn about the subtle but significant shift, visit [UPCCs – what’s new and why](#).

B.C.’s UPCC location can be viewed on [BC Gov News](#).

For a full list of UPCC locations including hours of operations and contact information, visit [HealthLinkBC](#).



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