The Community Paramedicine Initiative

BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) is working with the Ministry of Health, the province’s Health Authorities, the Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia (Local 873), the First Nations Health Authority and others to plan and implement the Community Paramedicine Initiative. The goal is to see 80 new full-time equivalents (FTEs) hired to support community paramedicine programs in rural and remote communities between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2019.

Program objectives:

1. Contribute to the stabilization of paramedic staffing in rural and remote communities by introducing community paramedics with the ability to augment additional shifts in emergency response capabilities.

2. Bridge health service delivery gaps in the community, identified in collaboration with local primary care teams, consistent with the paramedics’ scope of practice.

Implementing Community Paramedicine

The Community Paramedicine Initiative is being implemented in a phased approach over four years. During the first exploratory stage, paramedics familiar with the communities will work with BCEHS leadership and local health care providers to help define the scope of services required and participate in the development of a service plan. They will also help define the nature and scope of a community paramedic’s role so that job descriptions can be prepared and positions posted.

The rollout is expected to begin in early 2016. It will build on “lessons learned” during the initial months, and expand to more rural or remote communities, with community paramedics providing services such as point-of-care testing and more advanced monitoring of chronic and complex health conditions.

Community FAQs

How are communities selected?
Prototype communities are selected by BCEHS and the respective Health Authority.

Who’s paying for the service?
The BC Ministry of Health has provided funding for the four-year implementation.

How will patients be selected?
Patients will be referred by local health care providers.

For more information contact:
CommunityParamedicine@bcehs.ca

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Community Outreach & Awareness
Getting to know the local community and neighbouring First Nations communities, and helping them understand how community paramedicine can improve access to health care, is the first priority. Community paramedics will work with health care providers in the area to identify service gaps, and how together they can improve the health of residents, particularly older residents with chronic conditions.

Health Promotion
Encouraging patients to take responsibility for managing their own care and treatment – where safe and appropriate to do so – is an important step in improving health outcomes. This is a role community paramedics can readily assume, along with providing training seminars on CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and using an AED (automated external defibrillator).

Wellness Clinics
Many communities host wellness clinics and/or medical check-ins for patients with specific health issues such as diabetes. By helping out at these events, community paramedics can take on some of the services, allowing others – doctors, nurses, nutritionists – to spend even more time with their patients.

Wellness Checks
Older people living on their own, often with little or no support, may need someone to check in on occasion to see how they’re doing. Regular visits from a community paramedic can help these patients live longer in their homes, reduce their reliance on medically unnecessary 911 calls, and help ensure they stay connected with their primary care physician. Patients will be referred by their doctor or other community health care provider, with the service offered at no cost to the patient.

Community Paramedicine
British Columbia is improving access to health care in rural and remote communities by expanding the role of qualified paramedics. Community paramedics provide primary care services to increase access to basic health care services in non-urgent settings, in patients’ homes or the community. This is done within their training and experience and in partnership with local health care providers.

Benefits for BC
✓ Better access to health care for rural and remote communities
✓ Paramedics work alongside other health care professionals without overlapping roles
✓ Fewer hand-offs between health care professionals
✓ Fewer gaps in health care services
✓ Fewer unnecessary 911 calls and trips to ERs
✓ Recruit and retain paramedics in communities with low call volumes

Community paramedicine projects in other jurisdictions have shown the benefits to communities served, and resulted in a reduction of unnecessary 911 calls and trips to emergency departments, as well as improved patient satisfaction.