

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2020

Award: Integrating Digital Health and Virtual Care

Amherstburg Family Health Team

Achievement: Increased daily appointments and after-hours access with platform that incorporated EMR



With COVID-19 restrictions in place, Amherstburg FHT turned to virtual care to improve patient access. Healthcare organizations across the region realized that during the pandemic, after-hours access was going to be impacted as walk-in clinics reduced hours and patients hesitated to seek in-person care in acute care settings, due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure. This resulted in FHT patients expressing the need for increased after-hours access to care and drove the Amherstburg team to create an innovative, sustainable solution to provide after-hours access.

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2020

Synergizing and utilizing multiple features of the phone system, virtual care platform, and EMR functionality, the FHT was able to increase same day / next day appointments from 25 to 60 percent throughout the pandemic. As a result of over 75 percent of visits being delivered virtually, the team was able to increase appointments by 15 percent daily. They also improved after-hours access by creating a physician after-hours access line, making care available 34 hours per week, rather than the 15 hours available previously.

Patients can now access a physician directly during the weekday evenings, weekends, and holidays through automatic phone forwarding. Patients can have their concerns addressed same day during after-hours which opens more same day / next day appointments the following day, helping the team increase access overall. Amherstburg FHT will continue providing this increase in availability post pandemic.

The FHT has shared its scheduling structure and after-hours access model locally and regionally at various primary care committees. They have also shared and distributed team workflows, work instructions and process maps to those members. Several members of their team volunteered for regional leadership roles in pandemic committees and provided guidance on the implementation of virtual care strategies. The expertise and experience of these team members in virtual care has provided the confidence for other teams to implement their own virtual care access improvements.

Key Facts:

- Virtual care has made care more accessible and will continue post-pandemic.
- By creating the after-hours physician line, Amherstburg FHT identified a 127% increase in the amount of after-hours care.
- Same day / next day appointments now account for over 50% of FHT's appointments.
- Appointment wait-times decreased from 14 days to 4 days
- By utilizing virtual care, the number of patient appointments with a primary care provider per month has increased 15%.
- In order to accommodate the increased volume of calls, Amherstburg FHT has increased available phone channels by 60%.

Contact Information:

- Diana Nichol, dnichol@afht.ca; Andrew Atkins, aatkins@afht.ca, Amherstburg Family Health Team