

BC improves the delivery of Rural Emergency Healthcare

The Rural Coordination Centre of British Columbia and the BC Emergency Medicine Network release resource to support Emergency Care provider collaboration, leading to enhanced patient care

Oct 1, 2020 (Vancouver/Coast Salish Territory) -- Today, the Rural Coordination Centre of British Columbia (RCCbc) and the BC Emergency Medicine Network (BC EMN) launched the BC Smart Access Guide to Emergency Resources (SAGE), a web-based resource solution which enables emergency care providers in different parts of the province to enhance their ability to work together to treat patients in rural, remote and Indigenous communities via virtual healthcare. This tool will strengthen relationships and enhance trust between remote care providers and emergency support teams in regional and urban centres by providing contextual information about rural sites that all members of the care team can access and share easily and intuitively.

Before SAGE, physicians, nurses, and other emergency care providers at rural sites had to repeatedly communicate information about resources in their locale to supportive virtual healthcare providers from outside to contextualize urgent emergency medical situations. This included what equipment and supplies were available, personnel working at the site, and pictures of the location to provide visibility into the environment. They also had to provide information on external factors such as transportation options and weather conditions. The virtual healthcare team, which includes emergency practitioners, specialists, and the BC Emergency Transportation Services call takers, require these types of details in order to have an appropriate frame of reference to effectively support the rural health teams. The process of exchanging all of this information between rural providers and virtual support teams was time-intensive and incomplete due to data being siloed in different systems, if available at all, which would take time and attention away from patient management.

“SAGE has increased my ability to collaborate with colleagues in remote parts of the province,” said Vancouver-based Dr. Johnson, an Emergency Physician with the Rural Urgent Doctor in-aid (RUDI) program. “Prior to the launch of SAGE, I was trying to provide support without any knowledge of who I was working with, their practice contexts, what equipment they had or what kind of facility they were in. With SAGE it is almost like being there –I’m able to have the same kind of ‘hallway consult’ that I do with my colleagues at my hospital, only virtually. SAGE allows me to make an impact in patient care by improving my ability to help community providers.”

SAGE provides a searchable dashboard that allows care providers to efficiently access the information they need about a community’s medical site and the surrounding area. SAGE curates information from many different sources including public systems such as weather, mapping services; healthcare resources such as the RCCbc website and BC EMN databases; and most importantly, from rural community members who have editing access to the platform so as to input, update, and, if necessary, correct information for their site and community

through a user-friendly wiki interface. The tool brings together all members of the emergency care team to foster a mutual understanding of the current situation.

Now, when an emergency health situation occurs in a remote community, the health team that is supporting the rural physicians can log onto SAGE and access the 'Emergency Information' page to see a list of the types of medical staff who are working in that site including specialists, the types of equipment and supplies the site has available, and pictures of the site to provide a visualization of the location. They can also find relevant information related to the physical location of the site, such as if it is on an island or a remote mountain location, or if there is an airport or helipad nearby if a medical evacuation is necessary, and current weather and road condition. They now find all of this information in one solution, and in a consistent format that eliminates the need to ask for this information during an emergency situation.

"SAGE makes it much more efficient for me to treat patients when they are experiencing an emergency health situation," said Dr. Smith, Physician at the Northern BC Health Centre. "Prior to SAGE, I would have to repeat the same basic information several times with different people in the chain which was frustrating and inefficient. Now with SAGE, the important details about our clinic are readily available through the platform and so I provide the information about my patient and their condition and my colleagues do the rest – allowing me to focus on patient care."