

Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre results in 74% of patients avoiding a likely Emergency Department visit

April 28, 2020 – Early data shows that 74 per cent of patients assessed by the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RC VTAC) would otherwise likely visit an Emergency Department and/or call the 9-1-1 Service to address non-emergency health concerns.

“The RC VTAC provides Renfrew County residents who don’t have a primary care provider or can’t reach their primary care provider with an effective alternative to visiting the Emergency Department for non-urgent health issues,” said Dr. Jonathan Fitzsimon, Clinical Coordinator, RC VTAC and Chief of Medicine, Arnprior Regional Health. “The RC VTAC exists so that nobody is left at home to suffer without the care they need.”

The 24/7 health-care service launched on March 27, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 situation. To date, the RC VTAC clinicians have assessed more than 2,000 Renfrew County residents via phone or video appointments. In addition, there have been well over 550 patients who receive an in-home assessment from a community paramedic and out of these visits, 80% meet the criteria and are swabbed for COVID-19 testing.

“We’ve noticed a significant change in the way people are using 9-1-1 as well as Emergency Departments,” reported Mike Nolan, Chief of the County of Renfrew Paramedic Service. “We know that many of the people calling RC VTAC would have, in the past, called 9-1-1 or presented themselves to the Emergency Department as it was their only choice. For those that primary care providers are concerned about, a community paramedic will go to their home, do a follow-up assessment, initiate treatment, and in some cases leave behind remote monitoring devices so they can be managed virtually, 24/7.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic all five Renfrew County Emergency Departments remain open and residents who are experiencing a health emergency should call 9-1-1 immediately. This may include:

- Suspected heart attack
- Suspected stroke
- Major bleeding
- Severe breathing problems

“When the pandemic struck, we focused regionally on how to preserve hospital capacity in the case we experienced a surge of patients,” said Eric Hanna, President and CEO, Arnprior Regional Health. “The RC VTAC is one of many complementary and successful strategies that we have deployed in Renfrew County to protect our Emergency Departments.”

The Community Acute Team (CAC) is a critical part of the RC VTAC strategy to prevent unnecessary 9-1-1 calls, Emergency Department visits and hospital admissions. The CAC functions as a “virtual ward” with appropriate physician support to allow patients to be managed safely in the community rather than the hospital. The CAC provides support when a

patient through the RC VTAC is identified as requiring further comprehensive assessments, ongoing monitoring and/or treatment in their home.

“The recent data findings confirm the RC VTAC is helping to deliver the right care at the right time – and keeping residents at home safely who don’t need to be at the hospital during the pandemic,” said Karen Simpson, Administrative Lead, RC VTAC and Executive Director, Arnprior and District Family Health Team.

The RC VTAC is available to eligible Renfrew County residents, 24/7 by calling 1-844-727-6404.

About Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre

The Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RC VTAC) was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen access to primary care for all Renfrew County residents. It connects Renfrew County residents who have a health concern (including COVID-19 concerns) but either do not have a family physician or cannot access their usual family physician with 24/7 care and support from a family physician, nurse practitioner and/or community paramedic via phone, video or an in-home assessment. It also provides referrals to other services including mental health support. The RC VTAC is a collaboration between Renfrew County Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres, the County of Renfrew Paramedic Service, Renfrew County Hospitals and the Renfrew County and District Health Unit, with the support of Ontario Health East. Learn more at www.rcvtac.ca

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