

Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre assesses approximately 1,500 patients since go-live

April 14, 2020 – The Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RC VTAC) has now assessed approximately 1,500 patients since it launched on March 27, 2020. Care is provided 24/7 by a physician, community paramedic and/or nurse practitioner to Renfrew County residents who do not have a family physician or cannot access their family physician.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RC VTAC has strengthened primary care access for all Renfrew County residents and protects the region's Emergency Departments, allowing their teams to focus on emergent care.

"The RC VTAC has been the right solution to best manage the primary care needs of Renfrew County residents who would otherwise need to rely on an Emergency Department for non-emergency health concerns," said Dr. Jonathan Fitzsimon, Chief of Medicine, Arnprior Regional Health, and RC VTAC Clinical Coordinator. "Our early results show that we are providing the right patients with the right care in the moments they need it."

Kim Sell, a home care provider, was visiting a client in a Pembroke area retirement home and noticed the individual's wound had deteriorated and required follow-up. Because her client doesn't have a family physician, Kim called RC VTAC to connect with a family physician, who was able to deal with the problem over the phone.

"My client avoided an unnecessary Emergency Department visit, two taxi rides and many hours in a waiting room," said Kim, Client Services Supervisor with Carefor Health and Community Services.

The RC VTAC is a centralized, 24/7 healthcare service that supports every Renfrew County community.

"Keeping people out of our Emergency Departments who aren't currently experiencing a medical emergency is key for our region to slow the spread of COVID-19," said Dr. Gina Corrigan, Lead Physician, North Renfrew Family Health Team and RC VTAC family physician. "The Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre has created a safe alternative for many patients to access timely care for non-life-threatening issues. Every person we keep at home, is another person we may have prevented from contracting COVID-19, for high risk populations this is even more important."

The RC VTAC has family physicians representing the whole of Renfrew County. This includes physicians from:

- Arnprior
- Barry's Bay
- Deep River
- Pembroke
- Petawawa
- Renfrew

"Primary care teams from across Renfrew County shared the concern that the pandemic would amplify the issue of many residents not having access to a family physician," said Karen Simpson, Executive Director, Arnprior and District Family Health Team and RC VTAC Administrative Lead. "In response, we came together as a health-care system across the county, with support from an impressive number of health-care providers and medical receptionists representing all areas in Renfrew County to ensure we can provide 24/7 care to all our residents."

Approximately 25 per cent of the calls to the RC VTAC result in an in-home assessment by a community paramedic. Out of these visits, about 80 per cent of people meet the testing criteria and are swabbed for COVID-19.

"Our goal remains ensuring our 911 Paramedic resources and Emergency Departments are being used for the most critical patients who are experiencing a life-threatening emergency," said Mike Nolan, Chief, The County of Renfrew Paramedic Service. "The Renfrew County Virtual Triage & Assessment Centre has extended our existing Community Paramedic model by providing access to a primary care physician. This allows us to support and keep people safely at home for as long as possible through in-home assessments, point-of-care testing, virtual remote monitoring, and leave-behind wireless devices."

The RC VTAC connects eligible residents who have a health concern (including concerns related to COVID) with timely care and support. Residents who need to refill a prescription will be directed by the RC VTAC to contact a community pharmacist who can manage the refill without the support of a physician.

"Arnprior Regional Health, along with other hospitals in Renfrew County, are maximizing their capacity during the pandemic by deferring non-urgent services," said Eric Hanna, President and CEO, Arnprior Regional Health. "The RC VTAC is a complementary strategy ensuring that we preserve our limited health-care resources to fight COVID-19."

Eligible Renfrew County residents can contact the RC VTAC at 1-844-727-6404. This new service is covered by OHIP with a valid health card. Learn more at www.rcvtac.ca

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