



### Health System Investigations: Quality Assurance Reviews Health Inquiries

Dr. John Cowell  
Canada's Virtual Forum on Patient Safety  
and Quality Improvement

Friday, November 2, 2012

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Presentation Overview



www.hqca.ca

- The HQCA and health system investigations – when and why are they undertaken?
- Legislation: *Health Quality Council of Alberta Act* - HQCA's role in quality assurance reviews and health system inquiries
- Conducting quality assurance reviews: HQCA's methodology and process
- Conducting health system inquiries: HQCA's methodology and process
- Case Study: *Review of the Quality of Care and Safety of Patients Requiring Access to Emergency Department Care and Cancer Surgery and the Role and Process of Physician Advocacy*
- Case Study: *Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry*



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



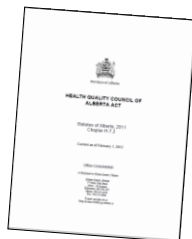
### Alberta Health System Investigations - Legislation



www.hqca.ca

#### Elements of the HQCA mandate related to reviews and inquiries:

- Assess or study matters respecting patient safety and health service quality.
- Appoint a panel and provide administrative support for public inquiries relating to the health system, as directed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- Each type of investigation is different



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Alberta Health System Investigations



Reviews	Inquiries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carried out by an appointed Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in accordance with the Alberta Evidence Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judicial process carried out by an HQCA appointed panel</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Act provides participants with protection from any legal action</li> <li>Testimony is private and anonymity is provided in the report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power to compel witnesses</li> <li>Testimony is given under oath and is public (details of confidential, personal health info can be heard in private)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final report goes to health authority or government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final report goes directly to the Legislative Assembly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically must also report to the public; can result in intense media and stakeholder interest; communication strategy by HQCA is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final report is also made available to the public</li> </ul>

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Alberta Health System Investigations



#### Quality assurance reviews – legislation:

- On the request of the Minister, the Council shall assess or study matters respecting patient safety and health service quality that are referred to it by the Minister.
- The Council may assess or study matters respecting patient safety and health service quality that are referred to it by a health authority.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Example HQCA Quality Assurance Reviews




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

 **Quality Assurance Review Methodology**  www.hqca.ca

- The HQCA’s approach has been developed over the course of 12 reviews from 2004 to present; two additional reviews currently underway.
- There are fundamentals in the review process
- Need to be thorough and disciplined
- The approach to each review varies and combines elements of differing methodologies

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

 **Quality Assurance Review Methodology**  www.hqca.ca

- In all cases the approach is systematic and systems-focused
  - Investigative tools we have found useful are *Root Cause Analysis* and more recently, *Systematic Systems Analysis*, which uses the SAFER matrix to support data gathering, organization, analysis and the generation of recommendations
- *Regardless of scope or scale, all reviews and their methods are focused on learning from past or present experiences to improve the future care for patients at the system-level.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

 **Quality Assurance Review Methodology**  www.hqca.ca

- Tactical approach typical to each review:
- Appoint quality assurance committee
  - Establish terms of reference and project charter
  - Conduct interviews – understand the problems through thematic analysis
  - Examine documents and patient health records, if indicated
  - Commission literature reviews
  - Present the findings – process varies depending on the topic

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Reporting Findings



- The challenge in presenting the findings is taking complex ideas and presenting them in a way that resonates appropriately with all stakeholders - including policy-makers, administrators, clinical practitioners and the public.
- We have learned that we must crystalize the issues supported by a thorough analysis of the them. We then present recommendations and required actions.
- Strategic communication planning and media relations are critical to the release process.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Quality Assurance Review - Case Study



### *Review of the Quality of Care and Safety of Patients Requiring Access to Emergency Department Care and Cancer Surgery and the Role and Process of Physician Advocacy*



#### Initiating events:

- **September 2010** letter from Alberta Medical Association (AMA) Section of Emergency Medicine to the Minister of Health
- **October 2010** – AMA letter broke in the media
- **February 2011** –Dr. Raj Sherman, a Member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, raised issues about physician advocacy and lung surgery wait times in the Legislature.
- **March 2011** – Minister of Health requests HQCA to conduct independent review

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Review: Emergency Department Care and Cancer Surgery and the Role and Process of Physician Advocacy



- Most extensive and in-depth undertaking in the history of the HQCA
- Reviewed system performance in 3 areas:

#### Part A

1. Quality of care and safety of patients requiring access to **emergency department care**
2. Quality of care and safety of patients requiring **lung cancer surgery**

#### Part B

3. Role and process of **physician patient advocacy**, intimidation and muzzling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Quality Assurance Review Case Study**  
**focus:**  
**Part B: The Role and Process of Physician Advocacy (including physician intimidation)**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Part B: Physician Advocacy**

**Methodology:**

- 106 interviews with 99 key stakeholders
- Province-wide physician survey
  - 2,046 of 7,964 physicians responded for a 26% response rate
- Review of system documents
- Literature review to determine concept, scope and practice of effective physician advocacy

**Findings:**

- We found that affected MD advocacy and gave rise to feelings of intimidation

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**PART B -- Highlights of recommendations and actions**

**Issue:** *Stability and consistency in the health system*

**Recommendation:** No further health system restructuring without consulting, having a clear rationale and a transition plan – let the system stabilize.

**Highlights of Required Actions:**

- Be inclusive and consultative if any further AHS restructuring is contemplated

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Issue:** *Blurred lines of authority and accountability in the health system*

**Recommendation:** Establish a task force to work on delineating roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the Minister, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and the medical profession.

**Highlights of Required Actions:**

- Task force membership must have an equitable balance of health experts, governance experts, government officials, and members of the public.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Issue:** *Culture within Alberta Health Services*

**Recommendation:** Instill a “just” culture within Alberta Health Services

**Highlights of Required Actions:**

- A just culture policy to serve as the foundation for all of the organization’s policies and procedures

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Issue:** *College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta*

**Recommendation:** Clearer lines of separation and clarity between roles, programs and services of investigations and complaints versus education and support.

**Highlights of Actions:**

- Establish a task force to review roles, programs and services of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Examples of media interest/awareness



www.hqca.ca



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Outcomes from full report (Part A & B)



www.hqca.ca

- 21 substantive recommendations
- Alberta's Premier and Health Minister fully endorsed all recommendations
- The findings and recommendations, if acted upon, will lead to improvements in the quality of care and safety for all Albertans, and improvements to the relationship between physicians and the healthcare system.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Future work



www.hqca.ca

- This was the first time the HQCA included "required actions" along with recommendations - now using in all current and future reviews.
- Challenged with how to appropriately track accepted recommendations so we can circle back with the public on promises made.
- Continue to collaborate with primary stakeholders, and be open and honest with media.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

 **HQCA Process - Health System Inquiries**  www.hqca.ca

- Receive an Order in Council
- Appoint a Panel
- Provide appropriate administrative support
  - financial management system support
  - office space
  - technology

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

 **Inquiry Case Study: Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry**  www.hqca.ca

**HQCA's involvement:**

- Based on an Order in Council, the HQCA selected and appointed Honourable John Z. Vertes, an independent retired judge, to lead the inquiry – he is the “panel”
- Provide administrative support
- Provided early staff support
- Found location for administrative office, established a financial management system, put in place legal agreements, such as funding and a relationship agreement between the panel and the HQCA
- The HQCA determines a budget which is then approved by cabinet

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---

 **Inquiry Case Study: Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry**  www.hqca.ca

- To ensure judicial independence, the health inquiry must be self-sufficient and self-directing
- The Inquiry establishes its own policy, such as standing and funding for interveners and holds investigative hearings
- During investigative hearings, witness testimony is taken under oath and is public
- Investigative hearings to begin this December.
- Full public report targeted for release April 2013

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





## Questions

[www.hqca.ca](http://www.hqca.ca)



Promoting and improving patient safety and health service quality across Alberta

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---