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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES ANESTHESIA CARE TEAMS

The McGuinty government is reducing surgical wait times with the creation of Anesthesia Care Teams.

Anesthesia Care Team pilot sites are being established at:

- Halton Healthcare Services
- London Health Sciences Centre
- Royal Victoria Hospital
- Sault Area Hospital
- Southeastern Ontario Medical Organization (Kingston)
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- The Ottawa Hospital
- Toronto East General Hospital
- University Health Network

Anesthesia Care Teams will include Anesthesiologists and two new health care delivery roles - Anesthesia Assistants and Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia. These two positions will support Anesthesiologists to increase access to surgery while reducing wait times. The new initiative is part of the McGuinty government's HealthForceOntario strategy.

Currently, Anesthesia Care Teams pilot sites are comprised of Anesthesiologists and Anesthesia Assistants who have graduated from the Graduate Certificate Program. Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia will join the teams when the program is developed and nurses graduate.

Introducing these new roles will increase patient access to operating rooms, reduce wait times for surgical procedures, and improve working conditions for the province's Anesthesiologists. These positions further the province's goal of making Ontario the employer of choice for health care providers.

Anesthesia Assistant

Anesthesia Assistants (AAs) work closely with the anesthesiologist during surgery. The AA provides technical support for complex anesthesia equipment and airway management. In addition, the AA performs activities such as provision of conscious sedation, administration of anesthetic gases and medications, insertion and management of arterial lines under the direct supervision on the anesthesiologist and under the authority of medical directives.

The Anesthesia Assistant Graduate Certificate Program, operated by the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, is the first of its kind in Ontario. The first class began in January 2006.

Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia

The Nurse Practitioner-Anaesthesia (NP-Anaesthesia) is a Registered Nurse (RN) with advanced education at the Master's level that provides specialized knowledge and skills that will prepare the RN to take part in the delivery of anesthesia care as part of the Anesthesia Care Team.

The Ontario government is funding the University of Toronto to create a joint education program between the faculties of Nursing and Medicine to provide the comprehensive curriculum required for the NP-Anaesthesia role.

Anesthesia Care Team

Anesthesia Care Teams grew out of recommendations made by a joint Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Ontario Medical Association Operative Anesthesia Committee (OAC). The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the University of Toronto faculties of Nursing and Medicine, and the Michener Institute are working together to develop the courses and operational conditions for the establishment of the Anesthesia Care Teams.

HealthForceOntario

An innovative \$45 million health human resources strategy, initially announced on May 3, 2006, HealthForceOntario has three main objectives:

- Establish new roles in high-need areas
- Develop Ontario's health care workforce
- Better equip Ontario to compete for health care professionals.

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