

My Resident Went to Hospital - What Happened?

Physician Access to Medical Information

Family members, politicians, and the public presume a smooth exchange of information between physician offices, hospitals, and long-term care. However, this is not the case. Information frequently gets lost during transitions of care (such as between hospitals and long-term care), resulting in errors that can negatively impact the well-being of the patient and add substantial costs to the health care system.

Situation: You have a new resident who comes from the hospital or a resident who has visited the emergency department or has been admitted to the hospital. How can you discover what transpired during those visits?

Access to patient records depends on the care community's affiliation with the health authority:

Fraser Health Owned and Operated LTC Community	Affiliated (Contracted) LTC Community
Approximately 20% of long-term care communities in Fraser Health	Approximately 80% of long-term care communities in Fraser Health
Physician has Full or Associate Privileges in Fraser Health	Physician is not employed by Care Community and not contracted by Fraser Health
<p>Access: MediTech available to all nurses and physicians</p> <p>Benefit: Seamless access available to review consults, x-rays, etc.</p>	<p>Access: No one has MediTech access at the care community, including the physician</p> <p>Process: Designated care community staff have access to the Unified Clinical Information system (UCI) operated by Fraser Health. Utilizing UCI, staff can connect with Fraser Health MediTech for resident information. These records can be added as hard copy to the resident's chart or scanned into the care community's electronic medical record.</p> <p>When a resident visits the emergency department or is admitted to the hospital, staff can access and download relevant documents.</p> <p>While UCI records are accessible in your office or home, it's crucial that they are promptly available to the care community, especially during holidays or when locums are involved. If information is missing only designated employees can retrieve it.</p>

Physician Access to UCI

Many physicians find the situation unfair: Why can't they access resident information easily from home, the office, or even a remote location like Gabriola Island?

The answer is, they can, but it requires effort on their part—they need to sign up for a personal contract with Fraser Health UCI or the Province-wide CareConnect system. It may be difficult to implement, (even tech-savvy doctors may find it taxing), and challenges often include investing in upgraded software and, occasionally, hardware.

The Provincial CareConnect system is considered somewhat easier to install and operate. The existence of two systems, with Fraser Health developing its own UCI system, is rooted in historical reasons.

Access: Physicians can sign up for personal contracts with Fraser Health UCI or Province-wide CareConnect.

Process: Requires effort from physicians; CareConnect is not coordinated by Fraser Health.

Support: Division technical department or Doctors of BC's technology office can provide guidance and support. Installation may involve software and hardware investment. The Provincial CareConnect system is considered somewhat easier.

Despite the challenges, the information is clear. Granting affiliated/contracted LTC communities' access to UCI has been crucial and life-saving. Due to legal and contractual constraints, physicians are not given access to UCI in care communities. However, staff in many LTC communities are adept at extracting information from UCI and preparing it for care conferences or rounds.

For more information, contact:

Dr. Ralph Jones
Physician Lead
Information & Technology
Long-Term Care & Assisted Living
Fraser Health

ralph.jones@fraserhealth.ca