



Case Study: CritiCall Ontario

CritiCall Ontario Accelerates Access to Care for Critically Ill

eceptionist®

CritiCall Ontario provides a unique and essential service to hospital-based physicians in Ontario, Canada. Through a provincial call centre, CritiCall offers physicians access to specialist medical consultations and if necessary, patient referral and transfers to higher level of care hospitals in the province. This service is available 24/7/365 as part of the province's health care system to support urgent and emergent patients.

This program began in the late 1980's as a regional solution to support physicians working in smaller hospitals with less access to specialty resources and expertise. In 1996, the scope expanded to include case facilitation for urgent and emergent patients throughout the entire province and since then, case volumes have increased steadily year after year.

CritiCall Ontario partnered with Eceptionist in 2009 with the introduction of an automated case documentation system to support the Call Centre. Through Eceptionist, call agents are guided through a workflow of scripted questions and care protocols for over 50 specialty services to appropriately route patient cases to the appropriate healthcare facility and provider.

The two organizations have continued to work together to expand the platform and enhance its ability to meet CritiCall Ontario's dynamic and progressive needs.

"Our partnership with Eceptionist has been very important to the growth and development of our Call Centre service," said Isabel Hayward, Executive Director for CritiCall Ontario. "They've provided us with an adaptable solution that has been able to keep pace with the ever-changing needs of our business while supporting our ongoing requirement to maintain clear and concise records for the cases we facilitate."



Background

In 1996, the Ontario Government decided there should be one service covering the entire province. CritiCall Ontario was chosen to spearhead the operation.

For more than 10 years the process of assisting physicians combined voice, paper and manual data entry. A doctor would call the service and the operator would write down all the pertinent details of the case, manage the request and then return to enter their handwritten notes into the database. This duplication of work was both time consuming and inexact.

"It was extremely difficult and stressful for our operators during this time," explains a Call Centre Manager at CritiCall Ontario. "Just managing the calls sometimes required a phone in each ear and taking notes at the same time. It wasn't an ideal system."

Eceptionist then entered the process to work with CritiCall and their mandate to streamline the overall workflow process, improve call response times and expand the overall service. Knowing that moving some patients from one care environment to another is both costly and potentially detrimental to the patient, Eceptionist saw the value of increasing the role of collaborative consultation in CritiCall's overall service. In conjunction with CritiCall's top flight management, Eceptionist and CritiCall realized that most of the time was spent trying to find the right bed types for patients, the hospitals with the available beds and the appropriate and available consulting doctor. Eceptionist came to the assessment that while beds are indeed important, they don't outweigh the dire need of an efficient e-consult process. Eceptionist worked with CritiCall to streamline its processes and provide efficient and effective access to care with the formation of emergency patient consultations with a referral, transfer and transport service built in the platform.

Keeping this in mind, Eceptionist and CritiCall Ontario determined that a completely new technology solution was required for this type of service delivery. The solution would integrate Eceptionist's powerful workflow and coordination platform with a





popular call center solution. This solution would then enable both data and voice collection, along with the ability to track calls between physicians and accurately document and track all pertinent times and interactions. It would also interface with the Critical Care Information System (CCIS) used in Ontario's critical care units.

Eceptionist and CriteCall approached the initial implementation in phases, where phase one included the deployment of an entirely new technology infrastructure including telephony, operating applications and a call center tool, within the company's new location. On September 8, 2008 – just 9 months after the project began – CriteCall moved into their new office and went live on the system.

With all healthcare facilities and providers in the province loaded into the platform including scripted questions for over 50 specialties, call agents were now able to efficiently capture, consult and record the structured information.

Enabling Better Health Outcomes

CriteCall Ontario provides physicians and other care providers with access to consultations and referrals for emergent and critically ill patients. The outcome of the consultation determines the next steps in the patient care process. If a referral is required, CriteCall confirms the required resources, which may include a bed, operating room time or a specific medical specialist, and strives to place the patient in an appropriate facility as 'close to home' as possible. Transport of the patient by land or air is also arranged by CriteCall in conjunction with Ornge, Ontario's air ambulance and medical transport service. CriteCall then tracks the patient to their referral destination.

The Eceptionist platform has been enhanced overtime to meet the evolving needs of CriteCall. When CriteCall implemented new protocols and tighter standards for supporting Life or Limb threatening conditions, the platform was further customized through configuration to support new workflows, protocols and services. Integration with Ornge and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) member registry was completed at this time to streamline transport coordination. Additionally, Eceptionist developed a custom dashboard that is projected onto monitors in the call centre for tracking the status of all open patient cases in real time.

Treating Patients Where They Live

Today, CriteCall Ontario manages approximately 100,000 cases per year. This number is steadily increasing thanks, in part, to the efforts of the organization's account managers. Account managers visit doctors, nurses and administrators at hospitals throughout the province, providing education about CriteCall's service and rolling out new programs on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

CriteCall has become a lifeline for small rural hospitals in Ontario as it now houses information for every entity and every on-call specialty in the province.

With Eceptionist, CriteCall has the tools and capability to efficiently and comprehensively assist physicians throughout the province, providing a solution that can be leveraged throughout the healthcare industry to improve patient outcomes and ultimately save lives.

Realized Efficiencies

Through the use of the Eceptionist platform, CriteCall has achieved greater efficiencies in their core operations. These efficiencies have been realized by the entire pipeline, from the clinician who makes the initial request, to the call center agent who conducts triage, to the treating hospital who provides care, to the Ministry of Health.

- Overall service level times have decreased significantly
- Physicians no longer have to explain patient cases multiple times, saving time and improving the quality of the information
- Reduced time to coordinate patient care and transfers
- The Ministry of Health saves millions in annual expenses as fewer patients are transferred across the Canada/USA border for care
- Patient repatriation to their local hospital is smoother, easier and more informed
- All of the above result in better outcomes for patients!

