

Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre

Backgrounder

Ontario has in place a strong infrastructure to support patients requiring critical care through our acute care hospitals, health care professionals and organizations such as Critical Care Services Ontario, CritiCall Ontario and ORNGE (Medical Transportation).

In response to the extraordinary challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario Health has established a Critical Care Table which is co-chaired by Dr. Kevin Smith, President & Chief Executive Officer of UHN, and Dr. Jennifer Gibson, Director of the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics. The Critical Care Table is authorized to direct COVID-19 critical care planning and implementation plans.

Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre

The Ontario-wide Critical Care COVID-19 Command Centre is led by Dr. Andrew Baker, Chief of the Department of Critical Care and the Medical Director of the Trauma and Neurosurgery Program at St. Michael's Hospital. The Command Centre responds to real-time needs for COVID critical care capacity. It combines the strengths and functionality of Ornge, CritiCall, CCSO, and the regional critical care leadership to ensure we have consistent and clear critical care decision-making across the province.

With the operation of the Command Centre:

- Existing processes are supported by a series of Regional Critical Care Leads (comprised of a critical care physician and senior administrator) 24 hour, 7 days-a-week rotation to help decide on the movement of COVID-19 patients and equipment, and make decisions as exceptional circumstances arise
- The Command Centre, which includes Ornge, CritiCall, CCSO, and five Regional Hubs, meet daily
- In real-time, each region functions as a command centre over critical care patients in their own region. Regional Hubs have authority to:
 1. Accept/Decline COVID-19 critical care patients to hospitals in the region
 2. Designate which hospital will accept
 3. Control regional repository of critical supplies in their region (e.g. vents); can have Ornge send resupply with transport (people/vents) and can move COVID-19 tests
 4. Trigger telemedicine help if required especially if patient does not need to be accepted
 5. When critical care capacity is extremely limited, Regional Hub critical care lead will act as final decision about access to critical care beds for other programs (i.e. trauma, neurosurgery, etc.)
 6. Escalate issues to provincial hub for critical care decision-making that crosses regional lines

The Command Centre enables one single provincial decision-making body to:

- Monitor critical care capacity needs in real time
- Respond promptly to predicted and unpredicted surges in demand at a provincial level
- Facilitate movement of COVID-19 patients, equipment, and supplies across regional boundaries based on need by liaising with Regional Hubs
- Make final decisions on provincial critical care issues

The Command Centre is building on existing function, expertise, and infrastructure. Together with the leadership and subject matter experts already in place in Ontario, we will be ready to respond to the unprecedented challenges during this pandemic.

If you have questions about the Command Centre, please contact Karen.Hurlburt@sinaihealth.ca.

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