

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Indigenous Cultural Competency and Alberta Health Services

Over the past 10 years, Alberta Health Services (AHS) has grown to become a leader in providing learning opportunities for staff in the areas of Indigenous awareness and sensitivity with an aim of ensuring equitable and safe care for all Indigenous peoples in Alberta. What began as a recommendation from AHS' Wisdom Council, the Indigenous Health Cultural Competency Education (ICCE) curricula has grown to include several educational offerings including:

- The Indigenous Awareness and Sensitivity eLearning
- The Indigenous People in Alberta: Introduction
- The Indigenous Awareness and Sensitivity Workshop
- Indigenous Health Telehealth Learning Series
- The KAIROS Blanket Exercise

The education had been developed in two formats for ease of access and participation. First is an eight-part e-learning module which enables the participant to work through the education at their own pace. The e-learning module's timeframe for completion is approximately six hours. The second option is for participants to take the education through group learning in a face-to-face environment (currently utilizing Zoom due to COVID) which takes approximately 3.5 hours.



Sign up for required Indigenous learning courses at Alberta Health Services. See link at end of story. (Photo credit: Lukas Bieri Pixabay.com)

In recognition of the importance of building a culturally safe health care system and building on the *Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, in 2018 AHS mandated that all staff complete either the eight, e-learning modules or the in-person workshop.

To further incentivize participation, these courses have recently been accredited by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta and the Alberta College of Family Physicians to provide continuing medical learning (CME) credits to support medical professionals working for and with Alberta Health Services. Completion of the eight e-learning modules (certificate program) provides six CME credits, while the face-to-face workshops provide three CME credits.

AHS has set a goal of achieving 100% completion by October 31 and many areas of the organization are on-track to achieve this goal. For example, Emergency Medical Services has reached an impressive 92% completion rate.

However, we have identified other areas with lower completion rates, including physicians, whose completion rate stands at just 4.9%. We recognize the immense strain being placed on physicians throughout this pandemic and understand that taking on yet another obligation is challenging. We do strongly encourage physicians to plan to take the ICCE offerings before October 31.

As the principal health care provider in Alberta, the Indigenous Wellness Core (IWC) would like to invite all physicians to participate in AHS's required Indigenous learning. This education provides insight and understanding of the historical relationship Indigenous people have with the health care system and Canada. It is through this education that we gain a greater sense of understanding about the inter-generational trauma and the historical atrocities that contribute to the negative social determinants of health we witness in some Indigenous populations.

Finally, in order to ensure ongoing quality improvement and innovation, the ICCE team continues to rely on the advice of the Wisdom Council and the ICCE Scientific Committee that is comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous physicians and health care professionals.

In addition, the IWC is currently partnered with Alberta Health and researchers from the University of Calgary in a Health Evidence Review (HER) to seek out evidence on successful interventions in the areas of cultural competency, safety, and anti-racism, implementation considerations and measuring impact. These lessons will form the foundation of future innovations in ICCE in the years to come.

For more information

[Required Indigenous Learning Courses | Insite \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#)

We look forward to your participation and supporting the health outcomes of all patients and clients accessing your professional care through Alberta Health Services.

Banner image credit: Marvin Polis