

Backgrounder: Reducing ALC and Creation of a Registry

Along with exploring the long-term development of new continuing care models, it is important to address more immediate priorities and cost pressures, including reducing the number of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) hospital beds to help offset acute care pressures.

ALC hospital beds are occupied by patients – many seniors - who no longer require acute care but are unable to access home and community care services. Seniors in ALC beds are often referred to as ‘bed-blockers’.

While variation exists between BC health authorities, ALC utilization is in excess of 10% of acute care capacity. In 2014/15 approximately 407,000 ALC days accounted for 13% of total hospital days across BC’s five health authorities. [Click here for a chart of BC ALC rates.](#)

According to recent data from Alberta, there are over 800 people each day in an acute care bed who could be cared for less expensively in the community. Over a 33-month period through December 2014, approximately 11 per cent of Alberta’s acute care capacity was occupied by patients who no longer require acute care but are unable to access continuing care.

If these individuals – many of them seniors - were cared for at home or in the community, Alberta’s health care system would save over \$170 million per year. Unfortunately, things are not too different in BC.

BCCPA recommends immediately using vacant residential care homes and assisted living units to address ALC and acute care pressures.

If 50% of ALC days can be reduced by caring for seniors in community instead of a hospital, health authorities could generate over \$200 million in annual savings which could be used to significantly reduce wait times for existing elective surgeries by funding over:

- 13,000 additional hip replacements; or
- 17,000 additional knee replacements; or
- 65,000 additional cataract surgeries; or
- 9,900 additional Cardiac Bypass Graft surgeries

BCCPA has surveyed care providers across BC regarding vacant beds and planning to publish results this year. While the data will paint a picture of underutilized capacity, BCCPA is recommending the province create a new public registry to track vacant seniors care beds and ALCs.