

**For immediate release  
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## **Specialized assessment training assists nurses in enhancing the patient experience in the emergency department**

Whitehorse – A number of emergency department (ED) nurses at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH) are now certified instructors in the Canadian Triage & Acuity Scale (CTAS) – a system that allows hospitals to effectively assess illness and injury and then prioritize urgency of patient needs.

This specialized CTAS assessment training was provided by Vancouver General Hospital and means Yukon's hospitals now have a dedicated group to provide instruction on an on-going basis to its emergency room nurses.

“CTAS is an important skill for our ER nurses to have and apply in daily practice because it ensures our patients get safe and timely access to care,” says Geoff Zaporinuk, WGH's Director of Patient Care. “And having this specialized expertise in-house we now have the ability to better support our people as well as a more positive hospital experience for patients when coming to emergency often under stressful and unexpected circumstances.”

In the past, CTAS instructors were brought to the Yukon. Today, training can be offered when needed to new ED nursing staff members, while also available to keep current staff triage skills up to date. An additional benefit to having local ER nurses provide the training is that they can present more realistic and common emergency scenarios and facilitate a discussion on the most appropriate measures to take.

CTAS is a national standard used by emergency departments across Canada. This means a triage nurse asks a number of questions (when possible), completes a brief medical history and measures vital signs in order to assign a score from 1-5:

- 1 – emergent/resuscitation required (i.e. cardiac arrest)
- 2 – emergent (i.e. unconscious)
- 3 – urgent (i.e. moderate abdominal pain)
- 4 – semi-urgent (i.e. back pain)
- 5 – non-urgent (i.e. sore throat)

This allows the nurse to identify patients that need to be seen first and create a priority list for those patients waiting for treatment. For example, those individuals with more acute conditions are seen first in order to reduce the risk his/her condition may

deteriorate. CTAS also allows the hospital to monitor the type of emergency care it provides in order to understand community needs, examine how it delivers care, improve patient flow, manage workload, and determine resources.

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