



Vitalité, moving toward the future

Quarterly Report
to the Community

December 2023

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Our Purpose

To foster the health of our patients and communities, today and tomorrow.

Through a collaborative, learning approach, we foster the health of our communities and ensure the best care for our patients. We are an innovative, forward-looking network, where everyone's voice counts, and where patients and families come first.

Our Values

Safety and respect above all

Humility and curiosity at the heart of a learning culture

Collaboration and mutual support that promote synergy

Integrity and accountability in all our actions



Vitalité, moving toward the future

Message from the President and CEO

During the quarter ending December 31, 2023, we continued our efforts to improve through many initiatives arising from our three major directions, namely **employee experience**, **patient experience**, and **building closer ties with communities**.

Among the highlights, the implementation of the integrated primary health care model is leading the way in New Brunswick because of its innovating nature but especially because of its promising potential for access to primary health care.

Our hospital performance has also improved with shorter wait times in some emergency departments and shorter waiting lists for surgery.

This progress was made as part of improvement projects conducted in targeted facilities. These projects involve concrete actions over 90-day cycles that are measured and then deployed on a wider scale.

I wish to thank the health care workers who are contributing to improvement projects and initiatives. The contribution of the field teams is the key to progress in our health care system.

As regards human resources, I would like to congratulate the teams for their great recruitment efforts, which are paying off. I also wish to highlight the work done by our teams and communities who welcome and support new employees, especially those coming from abroad who also need help to get settled.

I also want to thank our health partners, our volunteers, and our communities who play an active role in improving people's health and wellness and who do so by using a learning approach.



Message from the Chairman of the Board of Directors

This Quarterly Report to the Community is presented under the theme "Vitalité, moving toward the future," reminding us of the importance of acting collectively to transform our health system in order to better meet the needs of a changing society.

The Board of Directors, which has been in office since July 2023, is following the Network's progress very closely and is interested in the issues facing our health system.

Whether you are a member of the community, a partner or an individual working in the health field, this quarterly report shows you the improvement efforts made within the Network.

One thing is for sure, you will see that a culture of continuous improvement is well established, that determination is unflinching, and that values such as collaboration, humility, curiosity and respect are incorporated into the actions of the Network.

Enjoy the reading!



Major directions



Patient experience



Employee experience



Building closer ties
with communities

Strategic priorities



Improving access to
primary health care



Improving patient flow
and hospital performance

Improvement initiatives and projects

Optimizing patient flow: the Network's major project



With an aging population in need of increasing health care services, the Network has made improving patient flow and hospital performance one of its two major strategic priorities.

This major transformation project, mobilizing all employees and medical staff members, is mainly aimed at:

- lowering occupancy rates in our facilities to ensure they are safe at all times and reducing overcrowding risks to ease pressure on the hospital system;
- facilitating patient flow at every step of the health path—from admission to discharge and even after that;
- reducing length of stay while maintaining the quality of care;
- reducing wait times for emergency, tests and surgery.

Many meetings have been held with the teams working in the field, hospital management, and our partners to better understand the patients' needs and conditions for discharge, to advance processes and logistics, and to find ways to maximize the use of resources.

These transformation efforts will continue over the next few months. Family participation in discharge planning will be essential for this approach to be successful.



Primary health care: ongoing implementation of the integrated care model



Progress was made in the last quarter with the implementation of a new integrated primary health care model to improve access to primary health care.

This model makes it possible to deliver services to more patients by providing access to a collaborative and interdisciplinary team instead of to a single health care provider. The goal is to improve integration and collaboration among all health care providers and to quickly refer patients to the right care provider.



We are not building new clinics, but we are better connecting physicians, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals to serve a larger number of patients. The goal is to provide access to the right provider within five days.

One of the project components is the creation of a coordination and referral centre that delegates the delivery of care to the right provider. The model also includes access to a joint electronic health record for the team of health professionals throughout the continuum.

In the Dieppe area, two teams of providers have started using this collaborative model and five other groups are currently being set up. Initial results are extremely encouraging. In December 2023, the two active groups had managed to add a total of 2,150 individuals to their practice. The first one managed to eliminate wait time for an appointment while the second one reduced the delay by three days.

In the Edmundston area, about fifteen physicians have agreed to use the integrated care model and we are currently finalizing the operationalization of the referral centre.

We have also started to work with the medical sector to set up care teams in the Inkerman-Shippagan-Lamèque, Shediac-Beaubassin-Cap-Pelé, Caraquet-Paquetville-Bertrand, Campbellton-Dalhousie, and Bathurst-Beresford-Petit-Rocher communities.

We hope to implement the model in the 13 communities that we serve in the course of 2024. The implementation process may take a different form depending on the realities and needs of each region.

Key results

	2023				2024			2025	
	02-01	05-12	08-20	11-28	03-07	06-15	09-23	01-01	04-11
Edmundston, Rivière Verte and Lac Baker				92%					
Dieppe and surroundings				83%					
Shippagan, Inkerman and Lamèque				48%					
Campbellton and Dalhousie				0%					
Shediac, Beaubassin and Saint-Antoine				11%					
Bathurst, Beresford and Petit-Rocher				6%					
Caraquet, Paquetville and Bertrand				15%					

Emergency Department: progress made at the Campbellton Regional Hospital



The improvement project conducted in the Emergency Department of the Campbellton Regional Hospital helps to reduce the average wait time, despite an increased number of visits. This project is in line with the objectives of the patient flow project.

Certain cases are now assessed by a physiotherapist to alleviate the physicians' workload. Improvements in internal communication has decreased interruptions and improved information sharing within the team.

Instant communication of medical imaging test results made it possible to save time. The process to verify the prescription records of inpatients and patients under observation has been reviewed to eliminate unnecessary tasks.

Key results

Reduction in the average wait time for non-admitted patients (levels 3, 4 and 5), from triage to initial assessment by the physician.

- 60 min

Enhanced recovery after surgery program



The enhanced recovery after surgery program was successfully implemented in the Beauséjour Zone. This approach, which was initially launched in the Acadie-Bathurst Zone, focuses on the patients' active participation in their recovery after surgery and on support from a care team. The initiative has reduced postoperative complications and length of stay without increasing readmissions.

Key results

The average length of stay was lowered by...

3.1 days ACADIE-BATHURST ZONE

3.9 days BEAUSÉJOUR ZONE



Emergency Department: patient monitoring in the waiting room



A pilot project was implemented, adding care attendants to the team in the Emergency Department waiting room at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre.

The attendants' role is to check the vital signs of patients and ensure their well-being until they are seen by the physician.

We are planning on extending this initiative to all waiting rooms in the Network hospital emergency departments in 2024.

Access to ORL surgery in the Northwest Zone



Otorhinolaryngology surgical procedures are now being performed at the Edmundston Regional Hospital. The addition of this specialty was made possible through a surgical suite optimization project launched in March 2023 to maximize efficiency and resource utilization. This successful project made it possible to free up operating room time and add a new surgical service.

Access to cataract surgery in the Acadie-Bathurst Zone



The partnership forged with the Acadie-Bathurst Ophthalmology Center for performing cataract surgery outside the hospital has achieved excellent results. Between September 2022 and December 2023, Dr. Robert Javidi's team has performed over 3,000 operations, which freed up operating rooms at the Chaleur Regional Hospital for other types of surgery and provided faster treatment to ophthalmology patients.

Key results

The number of patients awaiting cataract surgery in the Acadie-Bathurst Zone went from

1465
to 268

No patient has been waiting for over a year.

(Between September 2022 and December 2023, Acadie-Bathurst Zone)



Upcoming project: new digital solutions in the Surgical Suite of the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre



In the spring of 2024, the SeamlessMD digital care journey platform will be available to patients who are preparing for colorectal surgery, hip surgery or knee surgery in the Surgical Suite of the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre.

This application will guide patients before and after surgery with reminders, evidence-based information, surveys for follow-up on symptoms, and videos to help them follow the care plan prescribed by their care team.

The implementation of a patient surgery tracking tool is also in preparation. It will enable professionals and the patient's loved ones to follow progress in almost real time during surgery and receive instant updates.

Choosing Wisely



The Network continues to actively participate in the Choosing Wisely national campaign, which is aimed at optimizing investigations and treatments based on best practices while improving the quality of medical care.

In the last quarter, several recommendations were implemented.

The Chaleur Regional Hospital and Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre have both obtained the "Using Blood Wisely Hospital" designation, attesting that they demonstrate ongoing commitment to improving transfusion practices.

This initiative eliminates the need for less relevant tests and has significant benefits for patients who undergo investigations and treatments according to the highest standards of care.

Key results (a few examples)



- New practices have **reduced the number of liver function tests by over 100,000 per year;**
- A review of practices contributed to **reducing the number of chloride and bicarbonate blood tests done every year by 96,000;**
- A change in vitamin D dosage **saved the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont UHC laboratory over \$200,000 a year.**



Implementation of the collaborative care model in nursing



With the nursing staff shortage, the Network was able to reinvent the way nursing care is delivered to inpatients.

A new model, adding attendants as care providers working in a triad (group of three) with a nurse and a licensed practical nurse, was implemented. Everyone's scope of practice and responsibilities were also reviewed and optimized.

The patient care attendant makes rounds every hour to assess the patients' needs and status, which helps prevent falls, pressure sores, use of call bells, and unforeseen staff movements.

This care team reorganization was initially implemented on the surgical, medical, long-term care, and nephrology units as part of the first stage. This resource reorganization reduces the use of agency staff.

Patients on these units noted that wait to receive care was shorter and visits from the staff at their bedside were more frequent.

The next implementation phase will involve the mother/child program, mental health and addiction services, and tertiary and forensic psychiatry services.



Key results

(since the beginning of the project)

Average increase of care per patient per day  + 30 min

 + 139 patient care attendants hired

Mental health response in the emergency



Thanks to the teams' involvement, a suicide risk assessment tool is now used at triage in the emergency departments of the Beauséjour, Acadie-Bathurst and Northwest zones.

The standardized questionnaire helps to quickly identify and refer patients at risk.

Trauma-informed care training is also available to all the staff in emergency departments and mental health and addiction services. This better equips the staff to deal with patients.

Patient committee set up at the Restigouche Hospital Centre



The last few months have been marked by the establishment of the Eagles Patient Committee at the Restigouche Hospital Centre.

This initiative, which is part of the Network's learning culture, offers participating patients the opportunity to further discuss with the staff and work on common priorities. A series of meetings have been held to gather input on how to improve the quality of life in the facility, increase activities available or prevent violent behaviours.



"The committee is a good opportunity to discuss ways of making everyone's day more enjoyable and promoting a culture of respect."

- John Oakley, patient at the Restigouche Hospital Centre and chairman of the Eagles Patient Committee

Improving attendance management and reducing work accidents



The Network is continuing to implement the attendance management improvement project, which is aimed at managing frequent absenteeism more actively and ensuring that employees receive better support from the disability management team. These efforts are closely related to those made to improve employee experience, patient experience, and hospital performance.

The average annual number of paid sick days per employee in the Network is 11.8 compared to 14.3 in 2022–2023. It is the objective of the Network to reach an average annual number of 10 paid sick days per employee by the end of 2024–2025.

Employee occupational safety has also improved during the year. The annual work accident rate with loss of time is 1.3 accidents for 100 workers compared to 3.1 in 2022–2023 and 4.0 in 2021–2022.

Key results

Average annual number of paid sick days per employee

- In 2022–2023: **14.3**
- Last quarter: **11.8**
(annualized average)

Annual work accident rate for 100 health care workers

- 2021–2022: **4.0**
- 2022–2023: **3.1**
- Last quarter: **1.3**
(annualized rate)



Employee engagement



The Network is developing a tool to improve the frequency and quality of employee engagement assessment. The new tool (employee net promoter score) will be deployed every quarter. It will provide a better understanding of the employee experience in the workplace and will empower managers in working with their teams to make improvements.

Activities promoting staff engagement are held within the Network, including virtual meetings, meetings with the field staff, and lunches with the President and CEO to share employee experience within the Network and ways to improve it.

Recruitment and hiring (nursing)



The talent acquisition team is meeting daily to accelerate hires in nursing and in other critical health care professions. These meetings set recruitment priorities and ensure that efforts are constantly aligned with the organization's needs.

Our recruitment and hiring initiatives include:

- Following up on known potential candidates more quickly;
- Helping with immigration, relocation and integration into the community;
- Providing financial incentives;
- Improving the experience of student employees;
- Improving access to recruitment information and data;
- Improving recruitment event planning.

International recruitment



Our international recruitment efforts are ongoing while our overseas missions have resulted in over 300 job offers accepted since April 1, 2022.

Network representatives attended job fairs in Morocco, France and Belgium in the fall of 2023, as well as virtual

job fairs with candidates overseas. These events have identified nearly 200 potential candidates and the recruitment team is currently confirming these hires.

In 2023, over 100 new employees from overseas started working for the Network. Thanks to recruitment efforts with candidates overseas but also with New Brunswick graduates and health care workers from other provinces, we expect an increased number of recruits in 2024.

Key results

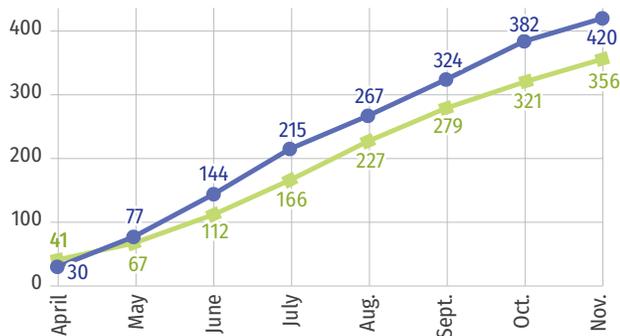
April 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023

	Number of graduates hired*	Number of international hires*	International offers for which a response is pending	Other hires*
Registered nurses	65	78**	67	24
Licensed practical nurses	48			36
Patient care attendants	54			36
TOTAL	167	78	67	96

* Accepted offers

** Will start as patient care attendants until registered in N.B.

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CLINICAL SERVICES



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registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, patient care attendants



For the second year in a row, the number of new hires within the Network exceeds the number of departures.

Rest cabins for employees



Rest cabins are being made available to Network employees who wish to enjoy a moment of relaxation in the workplace. These cabins, which include a vibrating massage chair, a surround sound system, and a light therapy system, provide ultimate relaxation. These cabins will soon be available to the staff at the Edmundston Regional Hospital, the Campbellton Regional Hospital, the Restigouche Hospital Centre, the Chaleur Regional Hospital, the Tracadie Hospital, and the Dr. Georges L. Dumont University Hospital Centre.



“What I like the most about my job is being actively involved in patient care and contributing to efforts to raise awareness and continuously improve.”

- **Daniel Landry**, Regional Pharmacy Department Coordinator at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre, leads the new antimicrobial stewardship program, which is aimed at fighting antibiotic resistance, a direct consequence of excessive antimicrobial use.

Other projects underway

- Stay interview process for staff retention
- Staff recognition program update
- Improving the processes to welcome and integrate new employees
- New leadership skills model
- Developing a legal compliance audit for occupational health and safety

Building closer ties with communities



The Network has been working closely with various communities in the last quarter. The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) team has been very busy with several communities.

As for Dalhousie, Balmoral and Belledune, the team has completed data collection and analysis in collaboration with the community advisory committee and is currently drafting the results report that will be given to the community around February 2024.

In the southeastern part of the province, the team is currently working with the Dieppe and Memramcook communities to implement the CHNA process.

To support communities with priorities identified as part of the CHNAs, the Network uses a learning approach where community members address priority needs and identify actions and initiatives to meet those needs.

Since October, the Grand Falls and Saint-Quentin communities have held a first meeting to review priorities set. These meetings also enabled them to take stock of initiatives that have already been implemented or are still underway to meet identified needs.

Learning community cycle



1

Engage communities

2

Assess community needs

3

Prioritize needs and identify evidence-based solutions

4

Apply, measure and evaluate results and adjust accordingly

5

Share knowledge and successes with other communities for the purpose of learning



“As a community organization serving newcomers, we are pleased to take an active part in the health needs assessment of our community. Collaboration between Vitalité Health Network and the communities is promising because it takes an inclusive approach to diversity. Results will help us improve our services to meet the health needs of the people we serve.”

- **Carine Bertrand**, reception/settlement agent, and **Tita Rabeniaina**, manager of the Reception and establishment team of the Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants de Dieppe (CAFi)

Public Health Initiatives



In the Grand Falls area, for instance, some Public Health workers are currently working on an initiative to reduce food insecurity, i.e. "*Eat fresh*". This initiative promotes access to bags of fresh fruit and vegetables at special prices. Public Health's contribution also includes developing recipe cards featuring seasonal products that are provided with the bags and promoting key foods.

Public Health professionals and the comité ACTION-RÉSILIENCE, in partnership with the New Brunswick public libraries, also created library bags that can be borrowed free of charge by local youth and their families with a library card. The library bags are small school bags containing 3–5 books on the same topic and they are very much appreciated by the community. New library bag themes were developed to support families and promote healthy child development. This resource is available in both French and English. The new themes are: *Emotions, Link building, Me and my body, and Discovering Food.*

The library bags are available in the libraries in Saint-François, Edmundston, Saint-Léonard, Grand Falls, Saint-Quentin and Kedgwick, but all New Brunswickers can reserve these bags with their library card and the online catalogue.

The Network Leadership Team has also stayed abreast of the specific issues of the various communities by meeting with or making presentations to different partners, such as regional service commissions, municipal councils, associations, and community organizations.



Health care workers and volunteers, the driving force behind the Network



The third quarter ending late December was closed with a review of the year 2023, greetings, and festivities.

Dr. France Desrosiers, President and CEO, took the opportunity to express her gratitude to health care workers and volunteers and to thank the Network partners for their collaboration in improving the health system.

Among the initiatives launched, health care workers formed a virtual choir to celebrate the holiday season but also to create a unifying moment, as seen on social networks.

Volunteers appreciated in our hospital settings

December is always a very busy month for the Network volunteers who demonstrate great generosity.

With the holiday season approaching, a number of volunteers visited patients to offer them decorations or small gifts but mostly companionship and compassion.

Efforts to recruit new volunteers are ongoing in 2024. People interested in joining our team of volunteers are welcome.

Volunteering programs in the hospital setting

- Hosts
- Recreational activities
- Friendly visits
- Patient experience partners
- Palliative care
- Spiritual and religious support

For more information, visit the volunteers page on the Network's website: [Vitalité \(vitalitenb.ca\)](http://vitalitenb.ca).



Acadie-Bathurst Zone



Northwest Zone



Restigouche Zone



Beauséjour Zone

Openness and transparency, to serve you better

Follow our progress

See the [Performance Report](#)

- The report is published on the Network’s website and updated on a quarterly basis.

For each key indicator, the report provides the:

- Benchmark (national or international figure for the same indicators);
- Network’s target for the current quarter;
- Results for the current quarter;
- Trend over recent quarters.

The colour code shows progress made:

- Green – exceeds target
- Yellow – meets target (+/- 5%)
- Red – below target

The items measured are chosen based on the improvements to be made. It is normal to see yellow and red, which indicates a gap between the current performance and desired performance.



[Vitalité performance indicators \(vitalitenb.ca\)](https://vitalitenb.ca)

Take part in the public meeting of the Board of Directors

on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 1:00 p.m., at the Atlantic Host, 1450 Vanier Boulevard, in Bathurst.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. France Desrosiers, President and CEO, and Mr. Thomas Soucy, Chairman of the Board of Directors, will answer questions from the public about the quarterly report and other Network initiatives.

The hyperlink to participate in the meeting virtually will be published on social media and on the Network’s website under the **Board of Directors** tab and the **Meetings** tab.

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