

Cataract operations pilot project

Summary

- Seniors, in particular, are likely to develop cataracts, an eye disorder resulting in progressive vision loss, which can be treated with surgery.
- Surgery wait times exceeding 6 months can result to greater vision loss, reduced quality of life, the loss of a driver's licence, depression and other adverse consequences such as falls and fractures (Gimbel & Dardzhikova, 2011).
- The average surgery wait times in New Brunswick (326 days) are almost three times higher than the Canadian average (112 days).
- A hybrid private-public care model could improve access to cataract surgery for seniors in New Brunswick, while at the same time reducing wait times.
- In this model, surgeries are performed in a private clinic instead of in a hospital, but the patient list is managed by the regional health authority and care is fully financed by the government.
- As part of this pilot project, the very first private clinic of this type was established in New Brunswick.
- The objective was to evaluate the clinic's capacity to improve seniors' access to cataract surgery in the Acadie-Bathurst area.
- 44 patients 65 years of age and over responded to the satisfaction questionnaire.

HSPP Focus Area

Project start and end dates

Organization/Agency

Location

Principal investigator(s)

Developing a path to innovative care

January 4, 2022 – March 31, 2024

Vitalité Health Network

Acadie-Bathurst, New Brunswick

[Natalie Barville](#)

Indicator	Impact/ Outcome / Result	Quote
Barriers to the health care system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 3160 cataract surgeries were completed between September 2022 and March 2024. • When the project started, there were 1465 patients on the wait list, a figure which bottomed out at 185, representing an 87.4% decrease. However, since patients are continually being added to the wait list, this percentage underestimates the net decrease. For example, the number of additional surgeries in March 2023 exceeded the number of patients on the wait list. • The quantitative analyses of the data produced by this survey suggested that patients are satisfied with the services, staff and the ease with which they can access the clinic. 	<p>“People are always complaining that they had to wait too long. However, I thought that I didn't have to wait for very long here. “</p> <p>Patient who underwent surgery 3 weeks after she was diagnosed.</p>
Repeat use	None of the 3160 cataract operations performed at the clinic required further hospitalization due to surgical complications.	

Methods and Comparison

The Surgical Access Registry was used to determine the number of completed surgeries, the number of patients on wait lists and hospitalizations due to complications between September 2022 and March 2024. The 44 seniors who underwent cataract surgery completed a questionnaire in February 2023 to gauge their satisfaction with the clinic.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- This pilot project opened the door to an innovative strategy to reduce stress on the health care system, while at the same time improving seniors' health and their quality of life.

- The findings indicate that seniors in the Acadie-Bathurst area now have quicker access to cataract surgery. In addition, these surgeries, which are not performed in a hospital, have not increased the number of subsequent hospitalizations due to complications.
- The deployment of the hybrid public/private care model for cataract surgery is possible, effective and sustainable in New Brunswick.

Recommendations

- Wait lists and patient prioritization must continue to be managed by the public system to safeguard health care-related equity for members of the public.
- Clinics should belong to and be operated by doctors to avoid business models such as those that use out-of-province companies whose focus is on profit to the detriment of quality care.

Next Steps

- The clinic is still performing cataract operations, which are subsidized by the Government of New Brunswick.
- Other such clinics have opened their doors in Miramichi and in Edmundston in collaboration with the Horizon Health Network.
- Discussions are underway to open other clinics in New Brunswick (e.g., Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John).

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Financial contribution from



Public Health Agence de la santé
Agency of Canada publique du Canada