

Team Based Care in Dermatology: Principles Based Approach

Facing a national shortage of dermatologists, Canadian health care systems are turning to innovative solutions to meet the growing demand for dermatological care. Team based care models have emerged as a promising approach, enhancing patient access and improving practice efficiency. While there is no single, standardized model, a principles based approach can guide dermatologists in successfully implementing this collaborative framework.

The Canadian Dermatology Association has developed this document that outlines the core principles of effective team based care. It serves as a practical guide for dermatologists interested in creating a model tailored to their practice and community needs. The information is based on insights from existing and successful team-based care models in dermatology, providing a foundation for innovation and excellence in patient care.

Pre-Implementation Foundations

- Define Your Why:** Clearly articulate your goals for establishing a team based care model in your practice. This could include reducing patient wait times, decreasing administrative burden, improving patient outcomes, etc. It is important to have this foundation set so you have a clear north star to guide you through this endeavour and to measure your success.
- Assess Your Needs:** Review your current practice and identify areas where a team member could add value. For example, could nursing staff undertake follow-up appointments for wound care or suture removals, could an administrative assistant support with patient communication.
- Explore Financial Support:** Look into potential financial assistance, such as government grants or provincial programs that might support with initial investment in new staff and infrastructure.

Collaboration

- Strong Leadership:** The dermatologist's leadership is crucial. As the team leader they provide oversight, establish protocols, and instill confidence in their team member's skills. Their support is a key enabler for empowering others to practice at the top of their scope.

- ❑ **Define Roles and Responsibilities:** Ensure each team member has a shared understanding of everyone's respective roles, responsibilities and scope of practice. This is crucial to ensure that tasks are delegated appropriately, especially when interprofessional consultation is required. Depending on the setting, this may have more clear guidelines than others. For example, if you are working in a hospital or academic setting there are often strict guidelines for staff like nurses which can influence the scope of work.
- ❑ **Effective Communication:** Foster open, respectful, and consistent channels of communication with the team. Regular team huddles and case discussions facilitate information sharing, maintain alignment and proactively address issues.

Patient Centric

- ❑ **Timely and Appropriate Care:** Ensure that patients receive the right level of care at the right time. Having other providers undertake low-acuity cases means that dermatologists can focus on complex conditions. However, it is critical for all team members to understand when the level of care required is out of their scope of practice and to bring in the dermatologist.

Efficiency

- ❑ **Establish an Escalation Pathway:** Ensure there are clear guidelines for when a team member should consult with or escalate a case to a dermatologist.
- ❑ **Optimize Workflows:** Delegate tasks like patient intake, wound care, or medication management to other providers, allowing dermatologists to work at the top of their scope.
- ❑ **Leverage Technology:** Utilize shared Electronic Medical Records, task management systems, and other tools to facilitate seamless information sharing and care coordination across the team.

Adaptability

- ❑ **Tailor Team Composition:** The composition of the team should be tailored to the specific needs of the patient population and the practice's goals.
- ❑ **Continuous Learning:** A commitment to ongoing education and professional development ensures the team remains current with the latest dermatological developments and continues to improve their skills. Encourage continuous professional development. This could involve regular case discussions, a journal club, or support for attending conferences and workshops.
- ❑ **Measure Outcomes:** Regularly assess the model's impact on key metrics, such as patient wait times, dermatologist workload, and patient satisfaction.