

PRACTICE OVERVIEW

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Pathway

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# Overview

## The challenge

The emergency department is not the only option available for COPD patients experiencing an acute episode, but ambulance crews are often not empowered to route patients to other sites of care or provide treatment on-site. The ED may not be the best site of care for COPD patients, and unnecessary visits strain ED capacity and delay care to more acute patients.

## The organization

Canterbury District Health Board, in the greater Christchurch region of New Zealand, is country's second largest district health board.

## The approach

Created a COPD pathway and the COPD Blue Card Action Plan that provides clear, clinically developed guidelines to help ambulance technicians identify the most appropriate site of care.

## The result

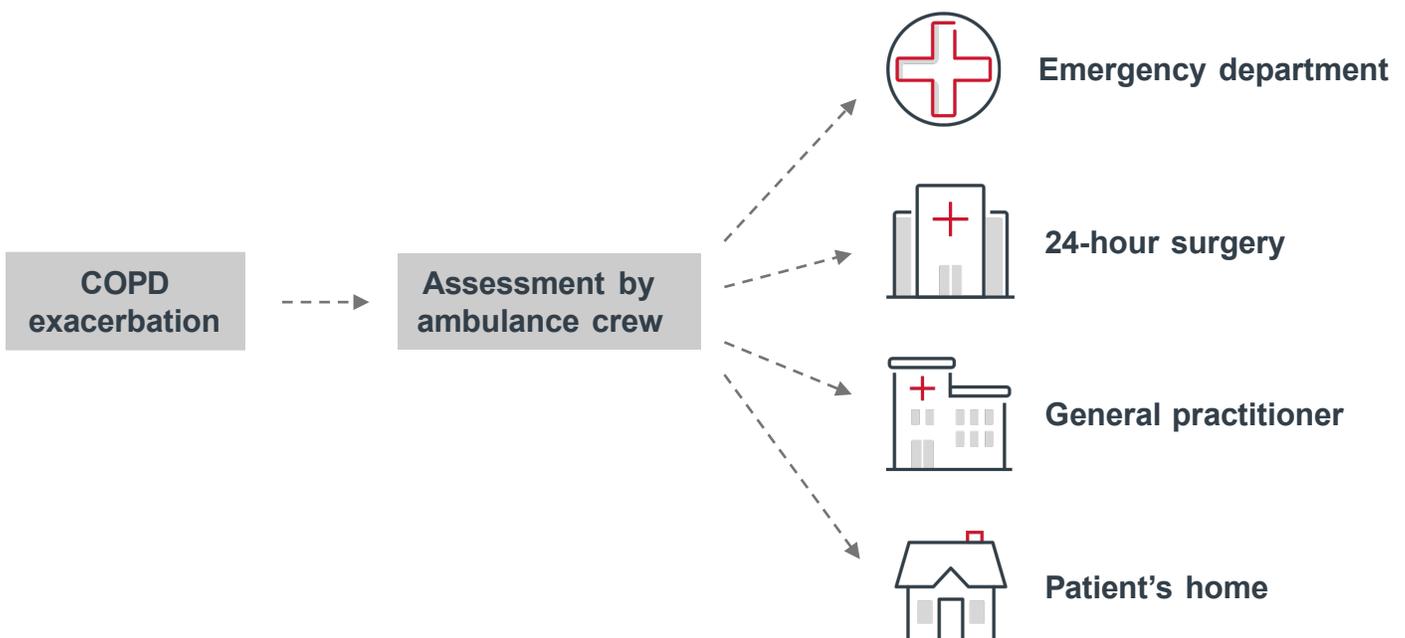
Canterbury decreased the percentage of COPD patients treated in the ED by 40%.

# Approach

Canterbury's created clear, clinically developed guidelines to help ambulance technicians identify the most appropriate site of care for COPD patients. At the heart of this process is the COPD Blue Card Action Plan, a laminated blue card that contains all the necessary information technicians might need to assess the patient. Technicians<sup>1</sup> are trained to use the card, the guidelines, and the different pathways that exist, depending on the patient's condition. It also helps technicians communicate the treatment decision.

A similar blue card is also given to the patients themselves, outlining both the processes they are about to undergo in the hospital and post-discharge advice.

## Patient journey along COPD pathway



1. Health care provider who can provide care, under the supervision of a doctor; most similar to a junior doctor.

Source: Timmins N, Ham C. "The quest for integrated health and social care: A case study in Canterbury, New Zealand," The King's Fund, <https://www.cdhb.health.nz/What-We-Do/Projects/Initiatives/Kings-fund/Documents/Quest-for-integrated-health-final-low-res.pdf>; Canterbury District Health Board, Canterbury, New Zealand; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

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# Results

Prior to the Blue Card Action Plan, 100% of COPD patients were treated in the ED. Since establishing this plan, only 60% of COPD patients are brought in to the ED. Not only does this alleviate strain on the ED, but it also provides patients with the most appropriate care.

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**40%**

Decrease in percentage of COPD patients treated in the ED

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