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**PRACTICE OVERVIEW**

for US health care providers

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Pathway

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How to prepare ambulance technicians to direct COPD patients to the right care setting

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# Overview

## The challenge

Ambulance crews are often not empowered to route COPD patients experiencing an acute episode to sites of care other than the emergency department or provide treatment on-site. This happens even when the emergency department (ED) may not be the best site of care for COPD patients. As the result, 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. They are responsible for providing preventative, acute, and post-acute care.

## The approach

Canterbury created a COPD pathway and the COPD Blue Card Action Plan to provide clear, clinically developed guidelines that help ambulance technicians identify the most appropriate site of care for COPD patients.

## The result

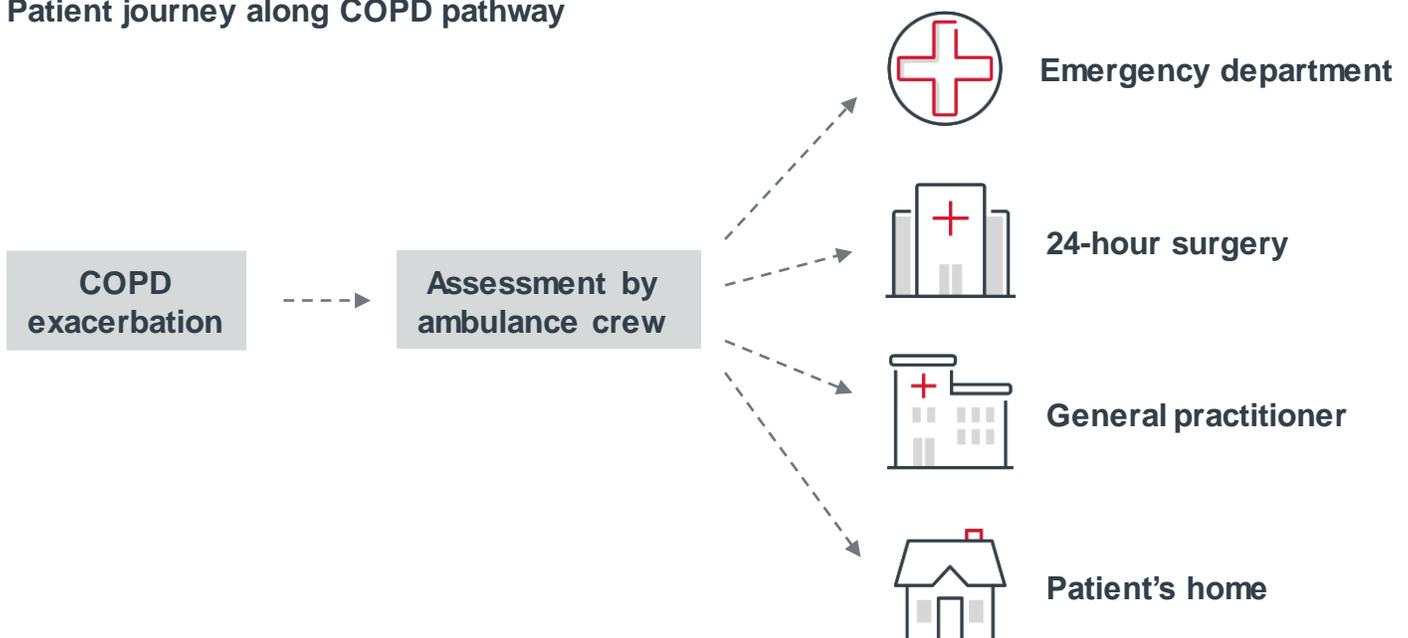
Canterbury decreased the percentage of COPD patients treated in the ED by 40%. They are now able to provide the right care to COPD patients experiencing an acute episode in the most appropriate setting.

# Approach

Canterbury 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. This includes guidance for assessing COPD severity and determining the most appropriate care destination as well as instructions to communicate the assessment and destination to the patient. Technicians<sup>1</sup> are trained on how to use the card, the guidelines, and the different pathways that exist depending on patient severity.

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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