

Glossary of Basic Terms and Acronyms Used by Health Care Professionals

A

- **Acute Care** – care usually delivered by a health care team in a hospital-like setting when someone is sick or injured, or recovering from a treatment such as surgery. When admitted to an acute care hospital to receive care, the person is referred to as an inpatient.
 - **Admitting** – the process of intake used when a person must stay overnight as an inpatient at a hospital. It begins in the Emergency Department and/or outpatient registration area.
 - **Advance Care Planning (ACP)** – the process of thinking about one’s wishes for future health and personal care, and documenting them in an organized way.
-

B

- **Best possible medication history (BPMH)** - a medication history obtained by a healthcare provider which includes a thorough list of all regular medication use (prescribed and non-prescribed). Usually obtained using a number of different sources of information.
-

C

- **Canadian Medication Incident Reporting and Prevention System (CMIRPS)** –an electronic network used for reporting medication incidents. Information can be reported by patients, family members, caregivers or any other individual who may be acting for, or in support of, a person receiving health care. If reporting on behalf of someone, their permission to report the incident should be obtained.
- **Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS)** – an assessment scale of illness or injuries used by medical professionals in an Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre to determine the type and timing of care needed for a patient. The CTAS ranges from CTAS-1 – defined as patients requiring immediate intervention and possibly resuscitation, to CTAS-4 and CTAS-5 – less urgent and non-urgent conditions that do not require the same level of immediate care.
- **Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU)** – an intensive care unit in a hospital for patients with life threatening heart and circulation issues. Patients who have undergone cardiovascular surgeries, including transplants, may be cared for in a CVICU.
- **Chronic disease** – a long lasting medical condition that can be controlled (but in many instances cannot be cured).
- **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** - a lung disease that includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema usually caused by smoking.
- **Community-acquired pneumonia (CAP)** - a lung infection that develops in people with limited or no contact with medical institutions or settings. Many different types of bacteria, viruses, and fungi can cause pneumonia.
- **Community Health Centres (CHC)** – a community based team that provides a wide range of health services in an outpatient setting. Services may include: health promotion, disease and injury

prevention, bereavement services, communicable disease education, immunization and many other community care, public health, and wellness programs.

- **Co-morbidity** - the co-occurrence of two or more disorders in the same individual at the same point in time.
- **Complex Continuing Care (CCC)** - health care by different practitioners and different care settings provided to a person with complex health needs in a coordinated manner and without disruption. All people involved in a person's health care, including the person receiving care, communicate and work with each other to coordinate health care and to set goals for health care.
- **Computed Tomography Scan (CT Scan; Cat Scan)** –a painless medical imaging procedure where x-rays of specific areas of the body can be combined to show a three-dimensional image of the inside of the body. CT imaging has the unique ability to image a combination of soft tissue, bone, and blood vessels.
- **Concurrent Disorders or Dual Diagnosis** - a condition in which a person has both a mental illness and a substance use problem.
- **Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)** - a condition in which the heart's function as a pump is inadequate to meet the body's needs.
- **Continuing Care** – care provided outside of an acute care facility or hospital, which may include such options as home care, supportive living, or long-term care.
- **Conventional Hemodialysis (CHD)** - a treatment for individuals with kidney failure in which a dialysis machine and a special filter called an artificial kidney, or a dialyzer, are used to clean the person's blood.

D

- **Day surgery** – a surgical procedure in a healthcare facility that does not require a stay overnight following surgery.
- **Diagnostic Imaging (DI)** – tests that help diagnose and treat a broad variety of conditions.
- **Discharge** – approval from a physician to be released from a hospital after receiving care as an inpatient admitted to a hospital or healthcare facility. This can be for the individual to either return home or to receive any further care in the community.
- **Discharge planning** – the process of preparing someone to move from hospital into a non-institutional setting either independently or with certain supports in place.

E

- **Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)** – a non-invasive and painless test that records the electrical activity of the heart.
- **Emergency Department (ED)** (also known as Emergency Room or ER) – a medical treatment centre within a hospital which specializes in emergency care. This can range from individuals suffering from life threatening conditions to more minor concerns.
- **Emergency Inpatient (EIP)** - a patient who has been admitted through the Emergency Department and is waiting to be moved to an inpatient bed.

- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** – provides emergency care to stabilize a patient’s condition, initiates rapid transport to hospitals, and facilitates both emergency and non-emergency transfers between medical facilities.
- **Expected Length of Stay (ELOS)** - the length of time a person is expected to stay in the hospital as an inpatient.

F

- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** - an umbrella term used to describe the range of disabilities and diagnoses an individual may have as a result of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

G

- *None relevant from this source*

H

- **Healthcare professionals/providers** – individuals that work in the health field and can include doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, psychologists, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and dieticians, etc.
- **Hospital Acquired Infection (HAI)** - an infection contracted because of a pathogen that exists in a hospital.
- **Home care** - a wide range of health care, personal care and homemaking services that may be offered to a person living in the community.
- **Hypertension** - The medical term for high blood pressure. It is a major risk factor for stroke.

I

- **Infectious disease** - Illnesses caused by viruses or bacteria that are spread between people or from animals to people. Researchers on homelessness and infectious disease often focus their investigation on Hepatitis A, B and C, tuberculosis, HIV/ AIDS and a range of sexually transmitted infections.
- **Inpatient** – a person admitted to a hospital or healthcare facility to stay overnight (for at least one night or longer), in order to receive care and treatment.
- **Intensive Care Unit (ICU)** – a unit in the hospital where highly trained staff and physicians provide 24-hour monitoring and care for individuals with life-threatening conditions.
- **Inter-hospital transfer / Inter-facility transfer** – the transfer of a patient by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to another hospital or facility for tests, treatment, rehabilitation or recovery. Patients can be moved by land or air.

J

- **Jaundice** - yellow staining of the skin and sclerae (the whites of the eyes) by abnormally high blood levels of the bile pigment called bilirubin. It is often an indication of liver or gallbladder disease.

K

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

L

- **Left Ventricular Systolic Dysfunction (LVSD)** - a condition characterized by enlargement of the left ventricle and vasoconstriction that often leads to heart failure. It may cause no symptoms or cause symptoms of heart failure.
 - **Long Term Care (LTC)** – a residence where adults can live and receive help with most or all daily activities and have access to 24-hour nursing and personal care.
-

M

- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)** – a test that uses a powerful magnet and radio wave energy to make three dimensional pictures of organs and structures inside the body. In many cases, MRI gives different information about structures in the body than can be seen with an X-ray, ultrasound, or computed tomography (CT) scan.
-

N

- **Needle biopsy:** The use of a hollow needle to remove a small sample of tissue for further examination.
-

O

- **Outpatient** – When a person is not admitted to the hospital for an overnight stay, but still comes to a physician’s office, clinic, hospital, day surgery office or other healthcare facility for diagnosis, treatment or to receive care, that patient is considered an “outpatient”.
 - **Over Capacity Protocol (OCP)** – procedures that are followed when a hospital is experiencing an unexpected and sudden increase in the number of patients requiring care at that facility to ensure that the care patients need is still available, when and where they need it.
-

P

- **Palliative Care** – care and supports for patients and families who are dealing with a progressive, life-limiting illness.
 - **Primary Care** – the initial point of contact between a patient and the healthcare system. A primary care professional gives access to the information, resources, assessment and treatment that a patient may need for optimal health outcomes.
-

Q

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

R

- **Referral** – the formal process through which a health care provider obtains an appointment for their patient with another health care provider who provides specialized assessment and treatment relevant to the patient’s health condition.
-

S

- **Secondary hypertension** - high blood pressure that has an identifiable, often correctable, cause such as kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, sleep apnea, or other conditions.
-

T

- **Tertiary prevention** – strategies intended to slow the progression of and help treat a condition. It also refers to rehabilitation efforts to reduce the recurrence of the problem.
 - **Triage** – a method of determining priority for who gets care in an Emergency Department according to their need for medical attention based on the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale.
-

U

- **Ultrasound** - a non-invasive procedure using sound waves to assess body structures. It is most commonly used for pelvic and abdominal evaluations.
 - **Urgent Care** – health care services for people who have unexpected but non-life-threatening health concerns that require same-day treatment.
-

V

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

W

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

X

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

Y

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

Z

- *None relevant from these sources*
-

Palliative Approach to Care for Workers who Support People who are Homeless in Canada

(sources: <http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/homelessness-glossary>;
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/public-health-practice/skills-online/glossary-terms.html>;
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/about/Page12677.aspx>;
<http://www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca/fr/toolsresources/GovernancePatientSafety/KnowledgePatientSafety/Documents/Common%20Healthcare%20Acronyms.pdf>)