

Communicating with physicians in the Calgary area

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CALGARY & AREA PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

Canadian Paramedical Services Inc.

Story and photos by Dave Lowery

An alternative for patient transfers and certification

In April this year, Alberta Health Services took over all emergency medical services (EMS) in Alberta. In Calgary, and across the province, that now means AHS is responsible for trying to clean up the waiting and congestion mess that ensues when paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) spend hours in the local emergency department hallways waiting to transfer care to hospital staff. The wait for beds has strained EMS to the point that sometimes ambulances aren't available for even the most minor duties such as transferring chronic patients home or to long-term care facilities. But what most people, including physicians, may not know is there is alternative transport available, albeit with parameters.

Canadian Paramedical Services Inc. (CPS) was originally established, with a different name, in 1985 by Drew Parker, 51. Parker worked for the City of Calgary as a paramedic for 30 years before retiring in 2008. His partner, Alan Hudye, 52, is an oil and gas engineer with over 27 years experience and joined CPS in 2007. Hudye also brings years of curriculum design and training to CPS. And though CPS mainly provides paramedical support for industry, oil & gas, mining, construction and special events, they have also found a niche in transporting patients between hospitals, home or long term care facilities when western Canadian health regions can no longer cope with the demand.

"It's only overflow where we come in but we do provide special event standby on a regular basis such as we have for Alpine Canada and the Trans Rocky Challenge Mountain Bike race," Parker says. "For transfers, the cost is covered by third party insurance; you pay us directly by Visa or health regions pay us when they authorize transport. But physicians can also call us directly if they want us to pick up their patient to bring them to their clinic, for example, or elsewhere for tests. We pick up the patient, wait for them and then take them back home.

Patients can watch their own DVDs or those supplied by CPS during longer transfers.



Physicians should know they have an option. What sets us apart is we guarantee a pick up time, standby and return delivery with medical supervision. It's not based on availability."

Each CPS unit has, at the least, personnel trained to the basic life support (BLS) standard. With that level comes equipment which includes oxygen, pulse oximetry, glucometer testing, an automated external defibrillator (AED) and, for those patients who request it, a personal DVD player so they can watch a movie during longer transports.

"Each transport will have no less than an EMT," Parker says, "and for special standby cases or patients who may require medication administration or more invasive medical procedures, we will staff the unit with paramedics and the associated advanced life support (ALS) equipment."

Though standby and transfer services are their core business, CPS also offers various first aid, CPR courses and more importantly for medical personnel, advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), pediatric advanced life support (PALS), and international trauma life support (ITLS).

"We offer training for our staff, nurses, physicians and other EMTs and paramedics through our website at <http://canadianparamedicalservices.ca/training>," Parker says. "And we've also partnered up with a group to customize training programs for any needs. Additionally, we can manage the training portfolio for clinics, doctor offices, departments or EMS services so we'll let you know when an employee is close to having, for example, their CPR or ACLS certification expire."

And though transport and standby services have, historically, been provided mainly by local health regions or city EMS, Hudye says CPS is not in the business of promoting private health care.

"We're a cost effective solution for the patient who has to see a physician, or return to their home hospital, without overburdening the local ambulance services," Hudye says. "This is not a private service; we are simply striving to take care of the overflow from an overwhelmed public system. We envision a scenario where a chronically ill or physically challenged patient could call their doctor, the doctor could call us and we could take the patient for clinical tests and then deliver the tests to the physician. We're trying to make the medicare dollar go further and assist local health regions. It's important to point out that we're not taking business away from any established region or local service. And if we have a patient that deteriorates beyond our capability, or our ALS paramedics determine that a patient needs to go to hospital, then the local EMS service is called to do that."

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CPS can handle patient ground transfers and has partnered with Ken Borek Air for air medivac trips that take longer than four to five hours by ground. In the past, CPS has been called upon by local health regions to assist with repatriating patients when the demand overruns the system. Additionally, CPS is available seven days a week to bring patients to doctor's offices, clinics or for medical tests. Call 403-259-8399 to book a transfer or visit the website at:

<http://canadianparamedicalservices.ca>

During the busier winter months, CPS employs up to 40 people and with the changing health care system, Vivian vanOsch, administrative executive and Darryl McDonald, operations manager, along with Parker and Hudye project that demand for their services will increase dramatically.

"In five years I foresee having a substantial patient transfer system in all four western provinces, on the airlines and possibly having our own aircraft," Parker says. "It's all about moving patients and we want to be the best provider of these services. It's our goal to be on time, on budget and provide the best care possible. And it's very easy to use our services as our reservation system is online too. We'll even go so far as to take the dog, family members, luggage, provide an in-transfer movie and meals!"

Equipment ranges from basic life support to advanced life support, depending on the patient's and client's needs.



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