



For Patient and Family Advisors

What is this glossary?

The Ontario health care system is filled with organization names, acronyms and other terms that may be hard to understand. As a patient or caregiver partner, it can be common to feel a bit lost in the many terms you will come across. It's okay to ask health care staff to explain the meanings of the terms they use, even if you have to ask more than once.

Below you will find a list of common terms used across the Ontario health care system.

COMMON TERMS & ACRONYMS	WHAT THEY MEAN
Academic (teaching) Hospital	In Ontario, hospitals are often distinguished by the level and complexity of care they provide. An academic hospital is one that focuses on research and provides clinical education and training to future and current health professionals. They generally provide advanced and high-complexity care. They are often affiliated with a medical school and other professional schools.
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)	A piece of provincial legislation that ensures goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation and buildings are accessible to individuals.
Alliance for Healthier Communities (AHC)	An association that represents community health centres, non-profit, community-based organizations that provide primary health and health promotion programs for individuals, families and communities. (Formerly the Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC).
Allied Health	Allied Health refers to members of the care team including various regulated health care professionals such as registered dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists, as well as other non-regulated professionals such as spiritual care practitioners.

Alternate Level of Care (ALC)	A description given to hospital patients who are healthy and stable enough to be cared for elsewhere, but who are waiting for additional care to be arranged outside of the hospital such as at home, in a long-term care home or a rehabilitation facility.
Appropriateness	Clinical decision on the right interaction, minimizes risk for provider and patient. The term 'clinical appropriateness' refers to the way in which care is delivered. The Canadian Medical Association has adopted the following definition for appropriateness in health care: 'It is the right care, provided by the right providers, to the right patient, in the right place, at the right time, resulting in optimal quality care.'
Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO)	An association for team-based primary care clinics in Ontario.
Board of Directors	A recognized group of people who oversee the activities of an organization. A board's powers, duties, and responsibilities are determined by the organization's own constitution and bylaws. For example, bylaws may specify the number of members of the board, how they are to be chosen, and how often they are to meet.
Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)	An independent, not-for-profit organization that provides information on a national level about Canada's health system performance and the health of Canadians.
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)	A national organization that provides services and supports to help people to maintain and improve their mental health, and to support recovery from mental illness.
Cancer Care Ontario (CCO)	Now a part of Ontario Health, this is the Ontario government's principal advisor on the cancer and renal system. It provides tools, resources and data to help health care providers improve the delivery of care. The Ontario Renal Network is also included under this umbrella.
Family Health Team (FHT)	A team of family physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, social workers, dietitians, and other professionals who work together to provide primary health care to individuals.
Fiscal Year (FY)	A timeframe used for accounting and performance management. In most health care organizations, the fiscal year runs from April 1st of one year to March 31st of the following year.

General Practitioner (GP)	A term used for doctor who does not specialize in one type of medicine. General practitioners usually provide primary care services in the community.
Health Records	Information about a person's health history and interactions with the health care system. Health records are considered personal information that should be kept confidential and are protected by the <i>Personal Health Information Protection Act</i> .
Health Technology Assessment (HTA)	A process to systematically review and summarize evidence about a particular medical device or program that includes making recommendations about whether it should be publicly funded.
Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES)	An independent not-for-profit organization that leads studies to evaluate health care delivery and outcomes in Ontario.
Information Technology (IT)	A department focused on clinical and non-clinical information systems and technology.
Interprofessional Care (IPC)	This term describes when health care workers from different professions (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers and others) work collaboratively to deliver care, based on a patient's needs and goals.
Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (KTE)	The process of sharing timely, useful evidence-based research findings with decision-makers and others who use research as well as patients and their families.
Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)	LHINs were not-for-profit Crown agencies in Ontario funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. As of April 2021 their health system planning and funding roles were transferred into Ontario Health regions. LHINs now operate under a new business name, Home and Community Care Support Services, to reflect a focused service delivery mandate. They plan, fund and integrate health services and manage and delivery home care in their local regions.
Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)	Provides patients the option to end their life with the assistance of a doctor or nurse practitioner. Medical assistance in dying is provided only to legally eligible patients.
Ministry of Health (MOH)	The portion of the provincial government in Ontario that governs health care and health promotion/prevention.



Ministry of Long-Term Care (MOLTC)	The portion of the provincial government in Ontario that works to deliver long-term care services.
Not-for-profit	A type of organization that does not earn profits for its owners. All of the money earned by or donated to a not-for-profit organization is used to keep it running and pursue its objectives. Typically, not-for-profit organizations are charities or other types of public service organizations.
Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario (NPAO)	An organization that advocates for nurse practitioners in Ontario.
Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP)	An association that represents family physicians in Ontario.
Ontario Health Team (OHT)	OHTs are groups of providers and organizations that, at maturity, will be clinically and fiscally accountable for delivering a full and coordinated continuum of care to a defined population. OHTs will initially focus on working together to improve care experiences and health outcomes for their identified initial target patient populations and, over time, will build towards integrated care for all patients through population health management and equity-based approaches to improving care.
Ontario Health Technology Assessment Committee (OHTAC)	A committee of the Health Quality Ontario Board that supports Health Quality Ontario's health technology assessment program and legislated mandate to make evidence-based recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on which health care services and devices should be publicly funded.
Ontario Hospital Association (OHA)	A membership organization that aims to foster leadership, support innovation and build linkages between hospitals and their communities.
Ontario Health (OH)	The government agency in Ontario responsible for overseeing health care delivery, improving clinical guidance and providing support for providers to ensure better quality care for patients.
Ontario Medical Association (OMA)	Represents Ontario's physicians, residents and medical students in areas of economic interests, healthy policy and professional advocacy, and legal services.
Ontario Nurses Association (ONA)	A union representing 65,000 registered nurses and health care professionals – as well as 18,000 nursing student affiliates in Ontario.



Ontario Patient Ombudsman	This provincial office helps patients or caregivers resolve complaints about their health care experience that haven't been resolved through other channels. It has the authority to handle complaints involving public hospitals, long-term care homes and home care and placement services provided through the LHINs.
Ontario Quality Standards Committee	A committee at Ontario Health that plays a key role in advancing its quality standards program, while also playing a broader role in Ontario's health care system. The committee works collaboratively with patients and the public, clinicians, organizations across Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long- Term Care to recommend ways in which quality standards and other clinical care standards can become reality. Its goal is a more centralized, integrated and systematic approach to quality health care.
Patient and Family Centred Care	A philosophy or guiding approach where patients, families and health care professionals collaborate as partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of care.
Primary Care Provider	This is a health care provider or a team who manages a patient's existing health issues and is usually the first contact for a patient seeking access to the health care system for a new health issue. Examples of primary care providers includes, but are not limited to: Family Physician, Nurse Practitioner, walk-in clinics, pharmacists, paramedics, telephone, or computer-based services (i.e. Telehealth Ontario) or other any first contact with the healthcare system.
Patient and Family Advisor, Patient/Caregiver Partner	The term patient advisor, also known as patient partner, is commonly used to include all of the people – patients, residents of long-term care homes, people being cared for at home or through community programs, clients of mental health or community services, families and friends of people receiving care – who collaborate with health care professionals and organizations to improve health care because of their experiences with the health system and unique perspectives.
Patient Relations	The term used to describe the structure and/ or process that organizations use to handle and resolve patient and family compliments, concerns and complaints
Personal Health Information (PHI)	A general term used to describe any and all health information related to a patient
Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)	PHIPA provides a set of rules for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information.



Practice Reports	Customized and confidential reports for clinicians that give physicians data about their practice, and share change ideas to help drive quality improvement.
Quality Assurance (QA)	A term used to describe activities that are undertaken to ensure the quality of any task performed is at an acceptable level.
Quality Based Procedures	A funding formula that looks at the whole episode of care or part of an episode of care rather than one service at a time. Only certain types of patient services are currently paid as quality-based procedures in Ontario, including hip replacement, knee replacement, and treatment for chronic kidney disease, congestive heart failure, and stroke.
Quality of Care Information Protection Act (QCIPA)	Legislation that creates a safe space for health professionals to talk openly about quality improvement, including the potential cause of any harm that comes to patients, without fear that the information will be used against them. The law applies to hospitals, independent health facilities, long-term care homes, licensed medical laboratories and specimen collection centres.
Quality Improvement (QI)	Focused and systematic activities that lead to measurable improvement in health care services and health outcomes for patients.
Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)	A Quality Improvement Plan is an organization's annual public commitment to meet quality improvement goals. By developing a Quality Improvement Plan, organizations such as hospitals, long-term care homes, and in primary and home care outline how they will improve the quality of care they provide to their patients, residents or clients in the coming year.
Quality Standards (QS)	Quality standards outline for clinicians and patients what quality care looks like. They focus on conditions or topics where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive.
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	A group of health administrators consisting the CEO, vice-presidents and others in senior, decision-making roles within an organization.
To be determined (TBD)	A term used when further planning is needed.

Virtual Care / Digital Health	Virtual cancer care refers to any interaction between patients and health care providers, occurring remotely, using any forms of communication or information technologies (computer, phone (either landline or cellular)), with the aim of facilitating or maximizing the quality and effectiveness of patient care. The term virtual care can be both an approach to care or a single interaction between a provider and patient.
Year to Date (YTD)	An accounting or performance management term used to present date for the given fiscal or calendar year.