ETriage® Helps Emergency Rooms Prioritize Patient Care

University of Alberta

The eTRIAGE® technology, developed in 2002 by a research team led by Michael Bullard, M.D., at the University of Alberta, is improving triage efficiency in emergency rooms across North America.

Triage methods prioritize a patient's need for urgent care based on information provided to emergency room staff. Since emergency rooms are constantly overcrowded, triage nurses are forced to make fast decisions about when a person is seen and this can lead to inappropriate assignment of a patient's need and inadequate emergency care.

The University of Alberta's technology, eTRIAGE®, is a Web-based tool that provides decision support to health care workers in emergency rooms. The software program helps triage staff classify a patient's need for urgent care by processing information gathered by a registered nurse and automatically assigning each patient a score from 1 to 5 based on his or her need of immediate care (Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale).

> *While the tool is designed to avert triage problems, it allows nurses to override it and use their own judgment as appropriate.*

Registered Nurse Rhonda Gariepy uses the eTRIAGE program developed by David Meurer (left) and Dr. Michael Bullard.

Development of the triage tool became possible primarily through funding by grants from the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health and Wellness.

eTRIAGE®, which was first licensed in 2003, is protected by copyright and trademark. It was implemented in all emergency rooms in the Edmonton Capital Health region in 2003 and now it is being used at the British Columbia Children's Hospital and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. The program is now undergoing a significant enhancement that will take it into the emergency departments of two major eastern Canadian health regions.

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