

# PVH | PLS Year in Review

## 2024/25

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## Introduction

Provincial Virtual Health (PVH) is a clinically focused team that provides strategic direction on virtual health initiatives at PHSA and across the province. Our vision is to boldly innovate and build integrated virtual health care services across B.C. Our purpose is to enable seamless, culturally safe, and accessible health care by integrating digital technology into the full continuum of hybrid (virtual and in-person) clinical services, where every patient will receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

A key priority in our work is addressing the complex challenges faced by rural and remote Indigenous Peoples in accessing timely and appropriate care. We embed Indigenous cultural safety and humility in all our projects, with a focus on improving health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples across B.C.

To transform how patients access services and information, we are enabling remote connections between patients and providers – anytime, anywhere. This transformation is guided by meaningful engagement with patients, providers, clinicians, health organization partners and communities – whether local, rural or remote – to ensure our service redesigns are responsive to their unique needs and workflows.

Our efforts to drive digital and virtual transformation span a wide range of health care settings, including acute care, home and community care, primary care and long-term care. As facilitators and connectors, we bridge the gap between patients, providers, and the right teams within PHSA and provincially. Throughout every stage of our projects, we provide leadership, guidance and support to integrate digital and virtual technologies into care delivery.

This includes tools and approaches that enhance the quality, accessibility and efficiency of health services.

We prioritize initiatives that address the health care needs of B.C.'s population, with a particular focus on identified target populations outlined in health authority mandate letters. This ensures our work aligns with provincial priorities and delivers meaningful impact.

In late 2024, the Provincial Language Services (PLS) team joined PVH to become one portfolio. This change presented a prime opportunity to support equitable language access to health care across the B.C. system and bring a continued focus to our Provincial Digital Health and Information Services Indigenous action plan as well as critical equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

PLS supports over 200 languages for on-demand over-the-phone and video remote interpreting through our main vendor, Language Line. In addition, we also maintain a pool of PLS freelance interpreters, and currently have 122 active interpreters.



In collaboration with PLS, we work to enhance language access for patients, helping to remove communication barriers and improve the patient experience across B.C.

Together, our team brings deep expertise in patient engagement, project management, educational methodologies, change management approaches, process analysis and optimization, practice, policy and legislation and Ministry mandates—all to ensure seamless, equitable, accessible and culturally safe health care for all British Columbians.



# Key achievements

## Indigenous Health Action Plan: Launched restructured plan

Provide guidance, support and coaching for decolonizing practice across PDHIS. Provide guidance, cross-functional support and coaching for initiatives to ensure Indigenous Specific Anti-Racism practices are embedded in PDHIS projects, systems, educational materials, evaluation and patient engagement.



-  **Driver/purpose:** Eradicate Indigenous-specific racism. Empower teams to approach learning and develop a working budget for all education needs of staff for the completion of San'yas and Anti-Indigenous Racism Response Training or ARRT courses.
-  **Impact:** Investment in a more inclusive, healthy and vibrant workplace that cascades into our communities.

## Indigenous Language services pilot project

-  **Driver/purpose:** This Provincial Language Services initiative aims to provide language services to better support Indigenous patients in accessing care.
-  **Impact:** The framework serves as a resource the PHSA staff can use to support respectful collaborations with Indigenous partners. It also offers valuable insights for those seeking to deepen their understanding of reconciliation. You can explore the full framework on the [PLS website](#).



## Artificial Intelligence in health care education

Collaborating with Digital Health Innovation team in Provincial Digital Health and Information Services to create introductory course, with three more modules planned for the future.

-  **Driver/purpose:** Provide employees at PHSA with a fundamental understanding of AI, its ethical use and data compliance. Module 1 (AI fundamentals) expecting to go public in 2025 with subsequent modules following as the year goes on.
-  **Impact:** Will reduce cognitive overload, improve efficiencies and enhance patient experience.

## BC Cancer Provincial Nurse Line

Replaced telephone nurse lines at five BC Cancer regional centres that only operated during business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday) with a provincially centralized program that provides 24/7 support for BC Cancer patients and caregivers with symptoms related to their cancer treatment. Created and delivered education resources to support nurses and workflows. Two manuals created, one curriculum designed to implement the training, one session outline with interactivity exercises included to increase team bonding.

-  **Driver/purpose:** Ensure current BC Cancer patients across the province have access to standardized, evidence-based telephone nurse care 24/7, improve access to timely and quality care and patient safety.
-  **Impact:** Since its go-live in January 2025, the Provincial Nurse Line has grown to provide 4,000+ calls per month to patients and caregivers. Workflow and resource enhancements since go-live have reduced average wait times from 3 hours to 1.5 hours and increased the proportion of calls answered live (versus patient's receiving a call-back), from 7% to 22%.

## Café de Paris

The Café de Paris program is a Linguistic Training program. Virtual sessions are offered by trained teachers since 2019 to all health care professionals of the province.



**Driver/purpose:** The program addresses language and communication access issues and barriers, and builds capacity within the health care system.



**Impact:** 600 hours of training were delivered free of charge to 50 participants, empowering health care professionals to gain confidence while speaking to Francophone patients in their preferred language.

## Episodic Virtual Primary Care

Episodic virtual primary care is a single health care visit between a patient and provider using secure video or phone calls. The visit is focused on a presenting symptom or identified medical condition, and neither the care provider nor patient expect an ongoing care relationship. It doesn't replace the relationship between a primary provider and a patient.



**Driver/purpose:** Address gaps in areas with limited access to primary care. Enhance capacity to episodic primary care services for unattached patients and more timely access to primary care for attached patients. Oversee the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of a coordinated provincial EVC program.



**Impact:** There are roughly 380,000 people registered on the Health Connect Registry to be attached to a primary care provider. This highlights the critical need for improved access to primary care. Since November 2024, over 40,000 unique patients have had virtual care appointments through this service and roughly half of the patients are unattached.

## External forum: 55+ Tech, Health & Wellness Forums

Partnered with Fraser Health and the City of Surrey to increase awareness and knowledge of virtual health through various organized events.



**Driver/purpose:** To work in partnership with health authorities to educate the population on virtual health and the options to support their health care needs.



**Impact:** Created a presentation, supportive documents including the PVH pamphlet, a contest, and presentation summary for the City of Surrey to speak about virtual health. 268 people registered across two events. Over half of the people who responded to our surveys stated they needed more support in understanding virtual health.

## Hybrid Model of Care

A hybrid model of care connects hospital patients with health care providers working remotely via secure video or phone calls. PVH planned and supported the go-live of three sites across two regional health authorities (Island Health and Northern Health). Currently developing provincial programming. Created education, practice and patient engagement resources to enhance experiences and outcomes. Engaged with Digital Health Patient Advisory group to gain insights on what patients need to be comfortable receiving this type of virtual care in a hospital setting.



**Driver/purpose:** Establish a service that connects physicians who are working remotely with in-person care teams to ensure hospital Emergency Departments can remain open during physician shortages and patients receive the care they need in their community.



**Impact:** No patient diversions since launch in late fall 2024. Overall positive results.



**It's nice to have a virtual doctor as an option so I do not have to wait to be seen.**

– Patient quote from 3-month evaluation

**When we were invited to participate in the project, we were very drawn by the purpose of the project and the importance given to the point of view of the patient who, in the end, is the one who receives the health care.**

– Christian Diaz and Lina Barba, Patient partners in PAVC Working Group

## MyGuide: Long COVID

Online support tool provides individuals affected by Long COVID with personalized, empathetic and effective support throughout their journey. Managed and executed all aspects of the project, most recently nationalized and integrated the Canadian Post-COVID Condition Guidelines within the MyGuide Long COVID self-management tool.



**Driver/purpose:** Enhance the overall user experience. Update the content based on the CAN-PCC guidelines. Improve website accessibility. Formed a national working group comprising patient partners, caregivers, and multidisciplinary PCC clinicians to guide MyGuide content development.



**Impact:** Over 19,000 users since launch in fall 2022.



**I could have used something like MyGuide when I was first experiencing symptoms. I was piecing together information from so many different sources, and it was hard to know what was reliable. MyGuide brings information together in one place. It's a great resource to help people before they are seen at the clinic.**

– Michelle, patient partner

## Opioid Treatment Access Line

Provincial telephone line for people to call and receive same-day, same-call access to prescription Opioid Agonist Treatment and is available to anyone in B.C.



**Driver/purpose:** Expand access to phone line support for those seeking treatment.



**Impact:** Increases access to Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT), and better connects people to regional care and resources for opioid use. 1,490 calls to Opioid Treatment Access line since implementation in August 2024 to March 31, 2025.

## Partnering for Appropriateness in Virtual Care

Creating a resource for patients and clinicians that outlines safe, high quality and culturally sensitive virtual health interactions between health care teams and community members, including patients, families and caregivers.



**Driver/purpose:** Provide recommendations for safe, high quality and culturally sensitive virtual health interactions between health care teams and community members, including patients, families and caregivers. Co-led by Provincial Virtual Health and Provincial Language Services and a patient partner.



**Impact:** Addressing the needs of individuals who speak a language other than English or are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and would like to receive care virtually.

## Remote Patient Monitoring

Completed in-person site visits at Interior Health, Northern Health and Fraser Health as part of a clinical training roadshow to support frontline adoption. On track for the launch of 4 out of 5 planned RPM pilot sites in 2025.



**Driver/purpose:** Deliver health care to patients – usually at home -- by connecting the patient and their care team through technology. Patient data is transmitted electronically (e.g., symptoms, vital signs, outcomes) from a remote home location to the care team. Enable health care team to continuously monitor vital signs and symptoms for early detection of health issues and interventions.



**Impact:** Empowers patient to be an active participant in their health care. Improves clinical decision-making and cost-effectiveness. RPM can reduce emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and lengths of stay, leading to lower health care costs.

## Secure File Transfer

Facilitate sharing large video files securely for BC Women's Neonatal Follow-up Clinic and BC Children's The Motion Lab Clinic. Created and delivered education material, facilitated workshops. Supported each clinic with the adoption of tools that ensure families can share videos created at home with hospital in a safe and secure way.



**Driver/purpose:** Ensure families can share videos created at home with hospital in a safe and secure way.



**Impact:** Families outside of Lower Mainland don't have to travel to have their infant tested. They can create a video at home and share with hospital using secure file transfer. Go-live February 25, 2025.

## Virtual visit platform transition for business use

To maximize use of Microsoft Teams and reduce the costs of paying for multiple virtual meeting platforms, PHSA began migration from Zoom for Healthcare to Microsoft Teams for all virtual visits and meetings, both clinical and non-clinical (business) use. PVH worked with Provincial Digital Solutions on first phase of this project, which focused on decommissioning Zoom licenses for business use.



**Driver/purpose:** Align with provincial direction to streamline maintenance, reduce costs, and ensure consistent support and service across the province.



**Impact:** From December 2024 to January 2025, approximately 3,000 licenses deactivated.

## In the engagement phase: Planning for future state

### Urgent Virtual Care Coordination

Creating integrated connections between 9-1-1 and 8-1-1 to regional health authority programs and services for urgent virtual triage, assessment and care. Pathways are easy to navigate and provide patients with respectful, culturally safe care in the right place, at the right time, with the right provider.



**Driver/purpose:** Meet patients' needs by directly connecting them with the most appropriate care for their nonemergent issues and reducing unnecessary burden on emergency services.



**Impact:** Received funding through the provincial Ministry of Health's Innovation Pathway Program to support two pilot projects including one focused on referral pathway development and one focused on digital enablement.



**Stories like ours need to be shared in order to make improvements within our health care throughout B.C. I can't imagine what our rural or remote folks face under similar circumstances with ER closures, distance, etc.**

– Patient Partner

## Virtual visit platform transition for clinical use

Continuing to lead the work on transitioning from multiple platforms to Microsoft Teams for all virtual visits and meetings, both clinical and non-clinical (business) use. PVH is working with Provincial Health Systems and many PHSA partners. Work includes detailed exploration of clinic requirements, learning resources, adapted clinical workflows, technology assessments and decommissioning remaining Zoom and Teladoc licenses.

**Driver/purpose:** Align with provincial direction to streamline maintenance, reduce costs, and ensure consistent support and service across the province.



# Virtual health governance

## Provincial Virtual Health Collaborative

The Provincial Virtual Health Collaborative is a group with broad representation from across B.C.'s health sector, focused on helping its members stay informed of virtual health priorities and initiatives occurring across the province, and identifying opportunities for provincial collaboration and knowledge sharing. The aim of PVHC is to increase visibility into innovative, novel, or potentially provincially scalable models of care being piloted in local or regional settings and foster active participation in a province-wide learning health system, through the sharing of research, evidence, and outcome data from virtual health initiatives active in different health organizations across the province. The Collaborative is comprised of senior leaders from health authorities and health entities across the province.

## Digital Health Leadership Committee

The Digital Health Leadership Committee aims to align strategic digital health initiatives within individual health authorities and across the broader health sector. By adopting a system-wide perspective, the committee ensures that digital health strategies are coordinated to support provincial priorities and shared goals. As a cross-sector advisory body, the committee helps to foster a more integrated, efficient and patient-centred digital health ecosystem. The committee is comprised of senior leaders in regional health authorities and health entities.

