



Strategic Clinical Network

Research Project

The Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network has been successful in their application for funding through [The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System \(PRIHS\)](#) from Alberta Innovates Health Solutions.

This three year project will include the development of an **Elder-Friendly Surgical Unit (EFSU)** at one Alberta hospital and the evaluation of this site for possible expansion across Alberta.

Project Description

Elder-Friendly Surgical Unit (EFSU)

The country's population is aging and its biggest health care consumers – seniors over age 65 – are living longer. By 2040, it is expected that 1 in 4 Canadians will be seniors. Considering that more than half of all operations are on patients over age 65, it is imperative that hospitals and health care providers begin to understand the special needs of senior surgical patients.

When admitted to hospital, seniors experience twice as many adverse events as younger Canadians, including complications to surgery. An elder's recovery from surgery can be compromised by chronic illnesses (e.g. cardiovascular disease), reduced mobility, or cognitive impairment.

Motivated by a desire to deliver top-level care to seniors, a team of physicians, nurses, allied health care specialists and researchers are developing a model of care for elderly patients who need extra care after surgery. In collaboration with policy makers and experts in the field of healthy aging, the team is piloting a new **Elder-Friendly Surgical Unit (EFSU)** that offers:

- **Customized care:** a team of surgeons, geriatricians, nurses, rehabilitation specialists, dieticians and social workers work with the patient and family to optimize recovery
- **Evidence based practices:** adopting standards that improve surgical outcome and prevent complications
- **Tailored transitions:** systems are in place to assist patients in returning to their home

It is expected that the EFSU will help seniors with compromised health achieve the best possible outcomes from surgery. A research study will evaluate whether the EFSU reduces complications from surgery, decreases length of stay in hospital, improves survival rates, and is sustainable and cost effective. If the EFSU delivers better care, this model can be adopted by other hospitals in Alberta and Canada.