

Date:	March 29, 2023
To:	Northern Health Physicians & Nurse Practitioners Inter-Professional Teams
Cc	Northern Health Medical Directors Health Service Administrators
From:	Roma Toor, Director – Regional Tertiary Services Dr. Colin Phillips, Specialist Medical Lead – Chronic Pain
Re:	UHNBC Pain Clinic – Temporary Pause on Non-Urgent Referrals

The UHNBC Pain Clinic provides specialized interventional pain management treatment to patients from across the health authority. The number of referred patients currently awaiting assessment and treatment at the Clinic significantly exceeds the capacity of the clinicians. To create time to address this issue, the Pain Clinic will not be accepting new non-urgent referrals from April 3 – September 30, 2023. During this period, Medical and Administrative leadership will work collaboratively to expand capacity for both clinic-based medical and interprofessional team consults and treatment, as well as ways to support teams across the region to build sustainable local capacity and provide more timely care.

Which patients can still be referred during this time?

Patients who meet the Clinic’s Urgent criteria should still be referred and their appointments will continue to be expedited. Urgent criteria include pain related to:

- Cancer
- Palliative care
- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

What does this mean for patients I’ve already referred?

Patients for whom a referral package has already been submitted will remain on the waitlist and will be provided information regarding self-management resources. Patients who were deemed Urgent will be seen most quickly, followed by other patients, based on the date of referral receipt.

How do I support my patients that I can’t refer during the non-urgent referral pause?

Patients can access self-management resources. There are many resources and virtual groups that are free to BC residents and provide education and support. Such resources, including a patient pamphlet, are available on [Northern Health’s Chronic Pain website](#).

Providers can access consultative advice from the pain specialists in Northern Health through the Rapid Access to Consultative Expertise (RACE) program. Primary care providers can use the website (www.raceapp.ca) or call the phone line at 1-877-696-2131.

If you need to refer your patient elsewhere during the non-urgent referral pause, the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons has published a list of provisionally accredited [Procedural Pain Management Facilities](#).