

ONTARIO'S LIFE OR LIMB POLICY

Implementation Update • April 2014



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to CCSO's first edition of the Life or Limb Policy Implementation Update for 2014. As announced by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Provincial Life or Limb Policy has been in effect since January 13, 2014. We are pleased to report that all of Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and Ontario hospitals have been actively involved in the implementation of the Life or Limb Policy to improve access to care for Ontario's critically ill patients. CCSO and CritiCall Ontario have been closely monitoring policy uptake and implementation, tracking data, and reviewing opportunities for process and system improvements.

Life or Limb Policy Poster

In January 2014 the Life or Limb Policy poster was distributed electronically to health care system providers across Ontario, followed by hard copy mail-out in March to all Emergency Departments in the province. This poster is a quick resource for hospital staff regarding the criteria for transfer of life or limb patients to a definitive level of care. It highlights the roles and responsibilities of referring and consulting physicians as well as CritiCall Ontario.

LIFE OR LIMB POLICY

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 13, 2014

Life or Limb Policy applies when a patient presents with a life or limb threatening condition.

All consultations for Life or Limb cases should be coordinated through CritiCall Ontario:

1-800-668-4357

Exceptions exist where established processes are already in place e.g., Ontario Stroke Network, Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention STEMI Program

Referring Physician:

- ▶ Request an internal consultation to confirm that the patient requires a higher level of care than the hospital is able to provide
- ▶ Contact CritiCall Ontario to facilitate timely communication between referring physician and most appropriate consulting physician/service
- ▶ Clearly communicate to the CritiCall Ontario call agent that the patient is a life or limb case and cannot be safely cared for at the hospital

Consulting Physician:

- ▶ Respond to pages from CritiCall Ontario regarding a provisional life or limb case within 10 minutes
- ▶ Provide medical consultation even if a bed or resources are not immediately available as the patient's life or limb threatened condition is priority
- ▶ Accept patients with life or limb threatening conditions that cannot be served by the hospital at which the patient is located, provided the clinical expertise is available

Life or Limb Provincial Perspective

We are pleased to share with you initial data provided by CriteCall Ontario showing provincial activity related to the Life or Limb Policy:

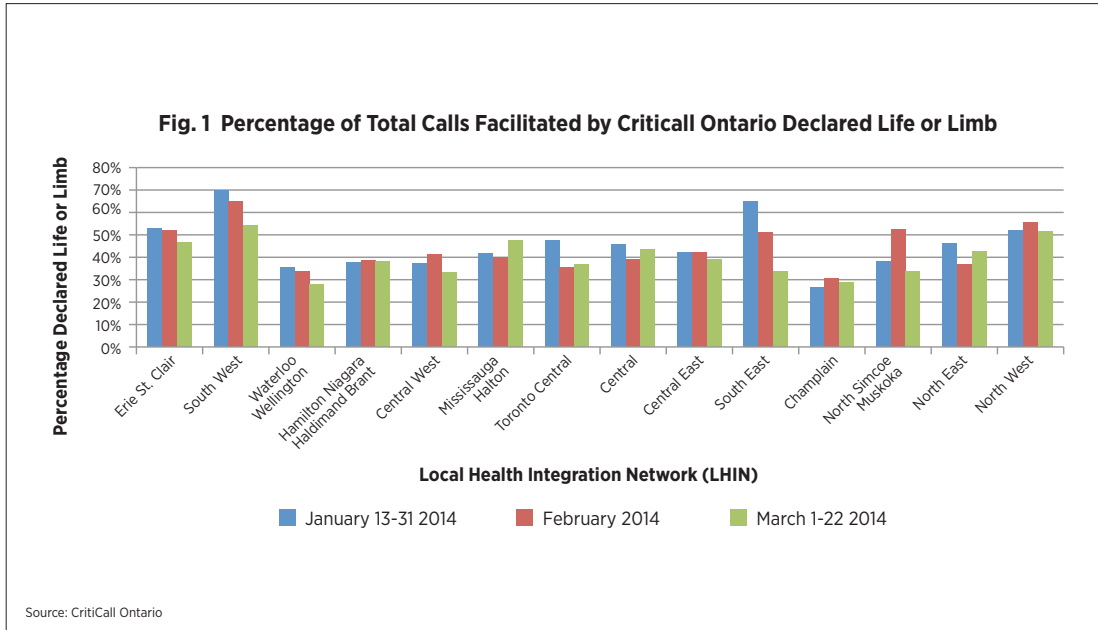


Fig. 1: This graph demonstrates the percentage of total calls facilitated by CriteCall Ontario that are declared as possible life or limb cases. The data covers the time period January 13th to March 22nd, 2014 and are aggregated by LHIN. It is evident that following the January 13th go-live date, hospitals across Ontario are engaged and adopting the Life or Limb Policy and utilizing CriteCall Ontario for call facilitation. Ongoing performance monitoring and data reporting, and collaboration with the LHINs and hospitals, will promote further provincial system planning and evaluation of policy effectiveness.

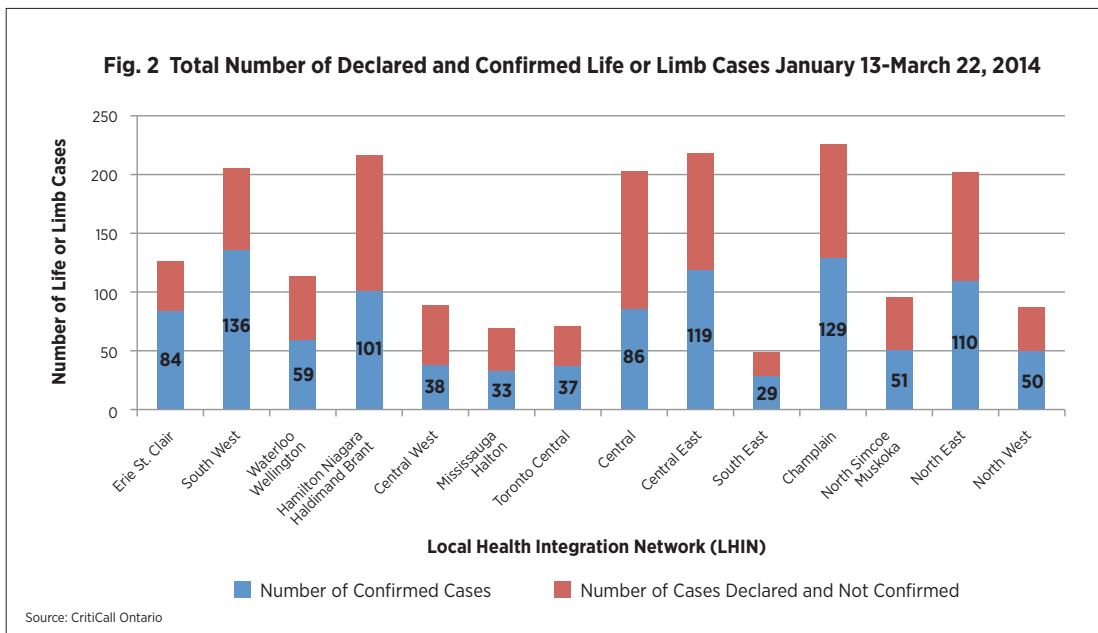


Fig. 2: The graph above demonstrates the cumulative life or limb cases declared and confirmed by LHIN for the period of January 13th to March 22nd, 2014. With ongoing utilization of the Provincial Life or Limb Policy, and ongoing education / feedback, it is anticipated that the ratio of declared to confirmed life or limb cases will decrease overtime.

As your organization continues to implement strategies and processes to provide care to patients with life or limb threatening conditions, CCSO offers tools for your reference to assist with policy implementation.

To view our library of resources please visit us at <http://www.criticalcareontario.ca/EN/Toolbox/Pages/Library.aspx>

For a copy of the Life or Limb Policy please visit: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/criticalcare/life.aspx>

The implementation of this policy helps to ensure that timely care is available for those with life or limb threatening conditions. The Life or Limb Policy reinforces the need for ongoing collaboration and accountability for the provision of care to this vulnerable patient group.

Your commitment in working towards a coordinated and efficient health care system is appreciated by patients across Ontario. We look forward to our continued collaboration with LHINS, hospitals and health system partners.

Sincerely,

Bernard Lawless, MD, MHSc, CHE, FRCSC
Provincial Lead, Critical Care and Trauma
CCSO

Linda Kostrzewa, RN, BAS Hons., MHSc
Director
CCSO

We encourage hospitals to continue using CritiCall Ontario to facilitate Life or Limb cases.

USING CRITICALL ONTARIO

- CritiCall should be contacted when a patient is declared to urgently require critical care services or sub-specialty interventions that are not available at the hospital. If your hospital does have the services available to manage a patient's presenting condition, an internal consultation should be carried out. If the local consultant does not believe the clinical condition can be managed at their hospital, they should then contact CritiCall to consult one of their colleagues at another hospital.
- During the call to CritiCall, the referring physician will describe the patient's condition and specify the nature of services required
- The referring physician will state to CritiCall that the case is 'Life or Limb'
- CritiCall will identify a consulting hospital and physician, and facilitate a call between physicians
- A confirmation of the patient fulfilling criteria of "life or limb" threatening status is made by the referring and consulting physicians. If the physicians determine that the patient requires immediate services that the referring hospital does not offer but that the consulting hospital can provide, arrangements to transport the patient to the consulting hospital should be made. A patient not determined to be "life or limb" threatened may still require a transfer for urgent access to subspecialty services.

For more information related to the Life or Limb Policy please contact us at ccsadmin@uhn.ca.
For more information about CCSO please visit us at www.criticalcareontario.ca