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## Case Study – CritiCall Ontario – Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

This case study was first published on the TELUS Health Solutions [website](#). TELUS is Eceptionist's exclusive partner in Canada and Eceptionist's software is sold in Canada under the TELUS iScheduler® brand name.

### CritiCall Ontario Accelerates Access to Care for critically ill with TELUS iScheduler

"My goal is to reach a point where every doctor in the Province with a critically ill patient doesn't think twice about calling CritiCall." *Kris Bailey, Executive Director, CritiCall Ontario*

It was a Friday night when the call came in. A young male patient had a broken spine and the attending emergency department physician knew his hospital did not have the trauma expertise or the resources required to handle the case and that without help, the patient may die.

The physician immediately called CritiCall Ontario.

A Call Centre Lead took the call. "After confirming who the doctor was, where he was calling from and the patient's working diagnosis, I quickly understood there was an urgent requirement for a trauma consult. Using our new software, TELUS iScheduler, I was able to use the database to call up a list of hospitals with the appropriate resources, including a trauma team. I then began the process of locating a hospital that could care for the patient and arranged for a consultation, via secure conference bridge, between the ER doctor and the trauma team. The patient was then transferred to the facility for emergent care."

### Enabling Better Health Outcomes

Rapid advancements, now taking place in the technology arena, see the convergence of different technologies, systems, and devices into solutions that address the unique requirements of the clinician community and healthcare providers. Treating emergent and critically ill patients is an area where the modernization of technology solutions benefits both physicians and hospitals by improving access to care and specialty care resources.

CritiCall Ontario provides physicians and other care providers with a 24/7/365 single, province-wide "one-number-to-call" access to consultations and referrals for emergent and critically ill patients who require higher levels of care. CritiCall locates the appropriate specialist to provide a consultation to the referring physician. The outcome of this consultation determines the next

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steps in the patient care process. If a referral is required, CritiCall confirms the required resources, which may include a bed, operating room time or a specific medical specialist, and strives to place the patient in an appropriate facility as 'close to home' as possible. Transport of the patient by land or air is arranged by the sending hospital. CritiCall tracks the patient to their referral destination.

To accommodate the current and growing needs of CritiCall, the TELUS iScheduler solution was proposed to assist the organization in further accomplishing its goals. Comprised of five modules including referral, enterprise scheduling, waitlist, telehealth, and organ case management, these modules operate individually or seamlessly integrate to form a powerful scheduling platform. TELUS iScheduler assists CritiCall in achieving greater efficiencies in their core operations with the functionalities of the referral and waitlist modules.

## **A First for Ontario**

CritiCall was established 20 years ago in Hamilton to help physicians with emergency or critically ill patients find beds at acute care facilities. Based on their knowledge of local hospitals and specialists, employees placed calls on behalf of the physicians taking this time-consuming work out of the physicians' hands. At the same time, similar programs were being established in Kingston, London, Ottawa, Toronto and Thunder Bay.

In 1996, the Ontario Government decided there should be one service covering the entire province. CritiCall Ontario was chosen to spearhead the operation.

For more than 10 years the process of assisting physicians combined voice, paper and manual data entry. A doctor would call the service and the operator would write down all the pertinent details of the case, manage the request and then return to enter their handwritten notes into the database. This duplication of work was both time consuming and inexact.

"It was extremely difficult and stressful for our operators during this time," explains Marie LePre, Call Centre Manager at CritiCall Ontario. "Just managing the calls sometimes required a phone in each ear and taking notes at the same time. It wasn't an ideal system."

Enter Kris Bailey, Executive Director, CritiCall Ontario. Kris joined CritiCall in 2007 with the mandate of streamlining processes, improving call response times and, through proactive marketing, expanding the service. Knowing that moving some patients from one care environment to another is both costly and potentially detrimental to the patient, Kris saw the value of increasing the role of consultation in CritiCall's service.

She explains, "I realized we were spending most of our time trying to find beds for patients. Beds are important but in some situations, with the benefit of a consult, the attending physician might be able to care for the patient in the bed where they are." Understanding this concept, Kris

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shifted her attention. "I decided the focus should be on streamlining our processes to provide an efficient, effective and accountable 'access to care' emergency patient consultation and referral service."

With this in mind, CritiCall Ontario determined that a completely new technology solution was required for service delivery. The solution integrates TELUS Health Solutions' industry leading web-based scheduling application, TELUS iScheduler, and TELUS Call Centre Anywhere (CCA), a multi-channel call center. This solution enables both data and voice collection, along with the ability to track calls between physicians and accurately document all pertinent times and interactions. It also interfaces with the Critical Care Information System (CCIS) used in Ontario's critical care units.

Working in collaboration with TELUS, CritiCall approached the implementation in phases. Phase 1 included the creation of an entirely new technology infrastructure including telephony, operating applications and the deployment of CCA, within the company's new location. On September 8, 2008 – just 9 months after the project began – CritiCall moved into their new office and went live on the system.

According to Marie, "It was a lot to get used to so quickly, but our call agents realized very soon that their calls were being managed more effectively and efficiently. With 212 hospitals and over 50 specialties embedded into iScheduler, and scripted questions that enable them to get the information required in a structured way, the data is captured once and recorded. And our physicians like it too, because they don't have to repeat themselves!"

Phase 2 – the implementation of iScheduler Electronic Case Tool – went live in June, 2009 and plans are underway for the deployment of reports, patient e-ticket, repatriation and portal log-in.

## **Treating Patients Where They Live**

Today, CritiCall Ontario manages approximately 16,000 cases per year. This number is steadily increasing thanks, in part, to the efforts of the organization's account managers. Account managers visit doctors, nurses and administrators at hospitals throughout the province, providing education about CritiCall's service and rolling out new programs on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

"For small, rural hospitals we are their lifeline," says Wendi MacKay. "We know who's on call for every specialty in the province and we're there to help 24/7/365. In fact, they really appreciate that."

"With TELUS iScheduler we have the tools and capability to efficiently and comprehensively assist physicians throughout the province," adds Kris. "The beauty of the solution is that it can be

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leveraged throughout the healthcare industry to improve patient outcomes and ultimately save lives.”

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