

Comprehensive Respiratory Care: Changing the Future of Respiratory Disease in Newfoundland and Labrador

Objective

To provide a description of the Comprehensive Respiratory Care (CRC) program in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).

Practice Points

1. Respiratory disease is a major cause of mortality and morbidity, and represents a high rate of chronic disease in our province. Chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) often require timely diagnosis, ongoing monitoring, and education.
2. In 2021/22, the prevalence of COPD and asthma in NL was 9.8% and 11.7%, respectively.
3. Availability of local resources in small communities

and long travel distances to a larger hospital can sometimes impact access to and uptake of testing and treatment. Furthermore, it is important that patients have access to the tools to self-manage and take control of their lung disease, yielding a better quality of life.

4. The CRC program brings together clinicians along with a program manager and clerical support to provide care to patients. It began in 2019 in the former Eastern Health regional health authority and has since expanded programs and services across the entire province.

Data (G. Vidyasankar, A. Ryan)

All data and figures were provided by the CRC team with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

Results

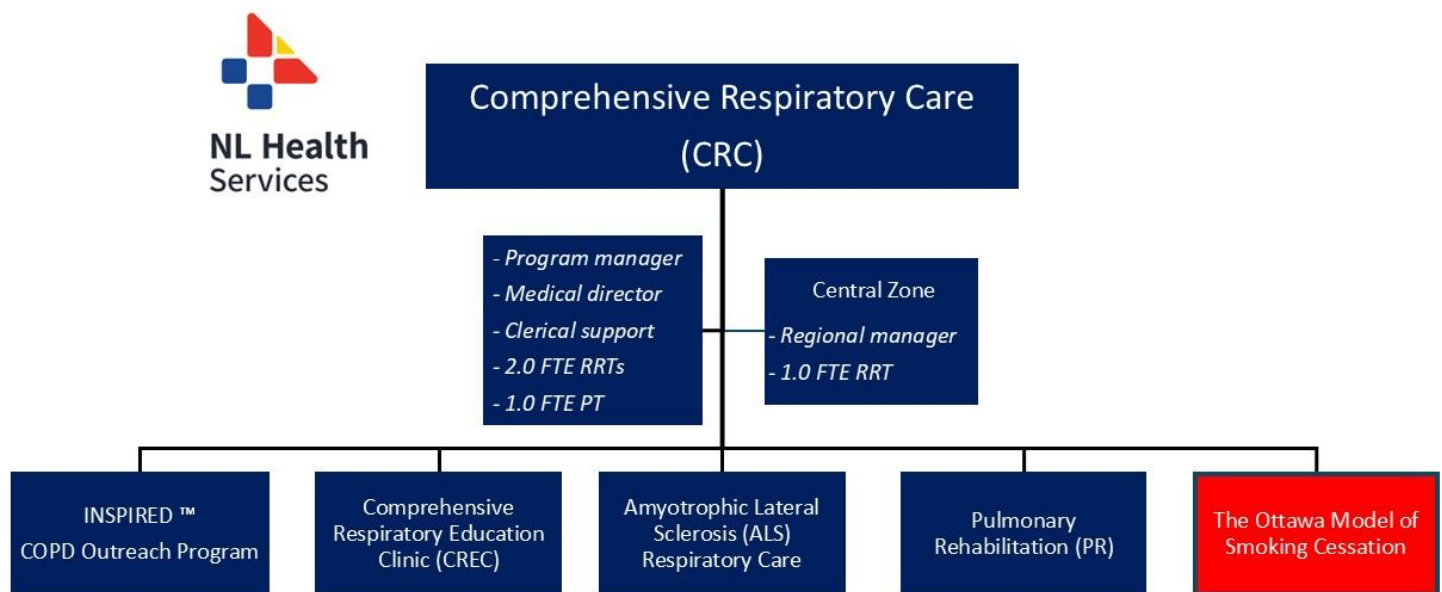


Figure 1. CRC Program Organization Chart

- The CRC program is supported by a program manager, a medical director, two full-time equivalent (FTE) clerical staff support, three FTE registered respiratory therapists (RRT) and one FTE physiotherapist (PT).

- The program is broken down into four individual programs: INSPIRED COPD Outreach Program, The Comprehensive Respiratory Education Clinic (CREC), Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Respiratory Care, and Pulmonary Rehabilitation.
- The CRC program also has a partnership with the Ottawa Model of Smoking Cessation team.

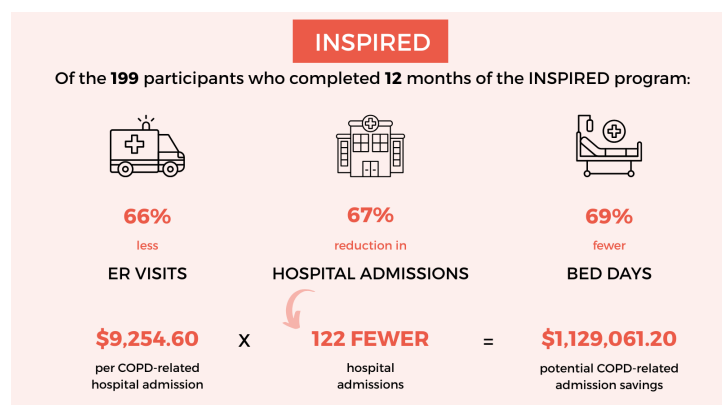


Figure 2. Details of the CRC INSPIRED Program at NL Health Services, March 2025

- INSPIRED is a nationally recognized program supporting individuals with COPD at home, to improve self-management and prevent exacerbations.

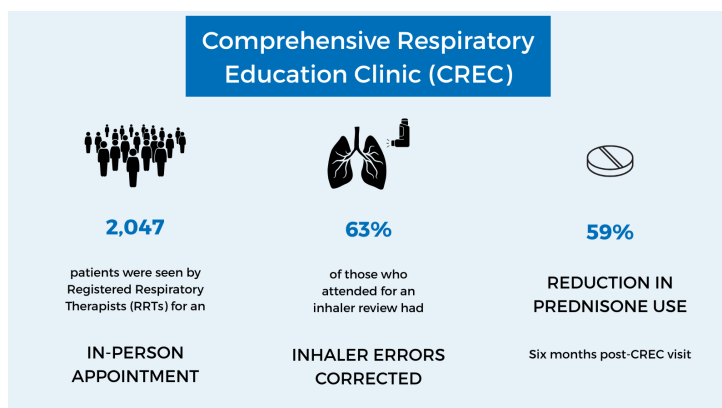


Figure 3. Details of the CRC CREC Program at NL Health Services, March 2025

- CREC is a specialized clinic offering education, spirometry testing, and inhaler review for patients with COPD and asthma.

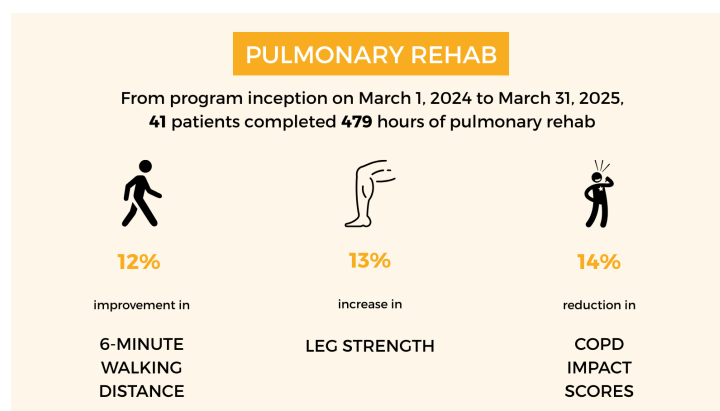


Figure 4. Details of the CRC Pulmonary Rehab Program at NL Health Services, March 2025

- Pulmonary Rehab is an 8-week prescribed exercise program that reduces shortness of breath, improves endurance, and enhances quality of life for patients with lung disease.

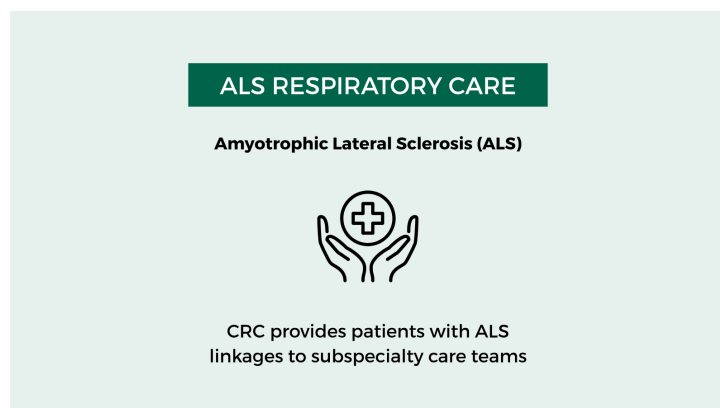


Figure 5. Details of the CRC ALS Respiratory Care Program at NL Health Services, March 2025

- CRC has partnered with the Division of Neurology to provide respiratory support to patients with ALS at home.



Figure 6. Details of the CRC partnership with the Ottawa Model of Smoking Cessation Program at NL Health Services, March 2025

- All CRC patients who are identified as smokers are offered the Ottawa Model of Smoking Cessation program. The quit rates at six months for patients of the CRC program enrolled range from 27.5% to 29.3%.

Conclusions

1. Health Accord NL's final report called for actions for improving coordination of care; placing greater emphasis on health promotion and well-being, the social determinants of health and chronic disease management; and adopting and leveraging virtual care technologies and enhancing care across the continuum to ensure that access to appropriate and high quality care and services is available to the people of NL to minimize travel.
2. The CRC program is an innovative, pragmatic strategy designed to improve and promote lung health and helps bridge the gap between acute and community care while improving access to specialized care.
3. The CRC program empowers patients to self-manage their disease while preventing dependence on the acute care system resulting in an overall improved quality of life.
4. The CRC program offers services from a multidisciplinary team working to their full scope of practice. Since its inception in 2019 in the (former) Eastern Health region, the program has expanded its reach across the province. In 2025, the team successfully facilitated their first travel clinics to the Labrador-Grenfell zone, offering in-person assessments and diagnostic testing in Goose Bay and coastal Labrador.
5. The CRC program aims to provide access to expert, evidence-based care of respiratory disease to all residents of NL, regardless of location.