

**The North West Region of Ontario  
modernizes healthcare with the  
power of Novari Health and the  
Microsoft Cloud**



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**When patients receive an appointment, they may have to drive several hours and hundreds of kilometres to get there.**

How often have you found yourself waiting months for a doctor's appointment or referral? While the healthcare system is full of well intentioned, caring individuals, the system has left many Canadians waiting in long queues to receive the medical care and attention they need. Healthcare administrator and providers in the North West worked with Microsoft partner Novari Health to address this issue. By deploying Novari Health's cloud-based Access to Care software platform, the North West region has transformed patients' experiences.

## Long Wait Times

The North West region of Ontario is roughly the same size as the entire country of France. Caroline Fanti is the Director of the region's Orthopedic Program at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. She describes the region as having an "urban, rural, and remote population," all of which need access to health services. In the past, patients in this region who needed surgery would get a referral from their primary care physician – then, an often-tedious process would follow for both the physician and the patient. The physician would fax a request to several surgeons, hoping for a prompt response. The system, however, provided no timeline for responding, and patients could be left waiting for an extended period before receiving a consultation. Worse still, these referral requests could accidentally end up with the wrong specialist, sitting for weeks before being redirected, despite the best efforts of the primary care giver.

## Rural Realities

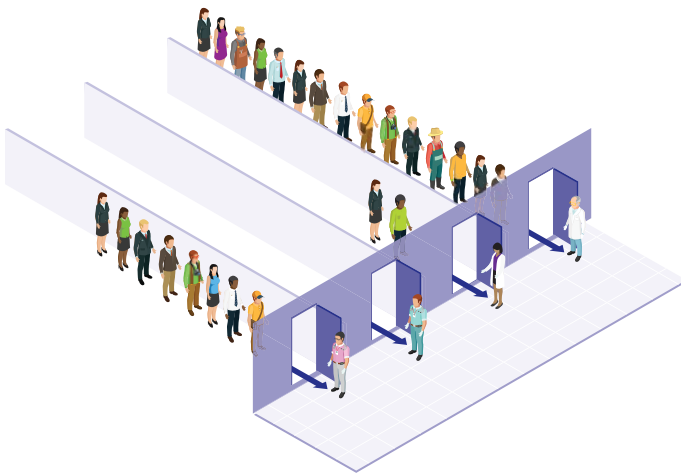
While the North West region operates in an extensive geographic area, it is serviced by one health sciences centre and twelve smaller community hospitals spread across the region. A result of this structure is that when patients do receive an appointment, they may have to drive several hours and hundreds of kilometres to get there. Making a trip to one of the community hospitals can take hours in perfect driving conditions; during the winter months, ice and snow on the roads can easily double driving time. While extended travel in icy conditions should be avoided when possible, patients who have waited months for an appointment find themselves between a rock and a hard place: brave the dangerous roads or reschedule their appointment. To address this, the region approached Microsoft partner Novari Health for a solution.

## The Solution: Novari Access to Care Software Platform™

Built on Microsoft Azure, the Novari Access to Care Software Platform is a flexible software system that streamlines the request process across healthcare. The central intake functionality reduces wait times and allows management of the entire referral process. “The Novari dashboard makes it transparent how long a patient has been waiting for a consult or surgery,” says Fanti. As a result, the average wait time for consultation for a patient in the region has dropped to under four weeks. The platform works with hospitals’ existing surgical information systems, complementing existing platforms and funneling all referral requests through one centralized queue – eliminating the need for primary care physicians to reach out to individual orthopedic specialists. When a referral request is made, an advanced practice provider assesses it to determine its urgency. This assessment allows for better triaging. The assessment also considers where the patient lives to assign the most convenient appointment time and location. Fanti reports that “pooled waiting lists within Novari allow us to offer patients care close to home if they choose to wait to have surgery, or we can offer the first available appointment and they can choose to travel to a different centre”.

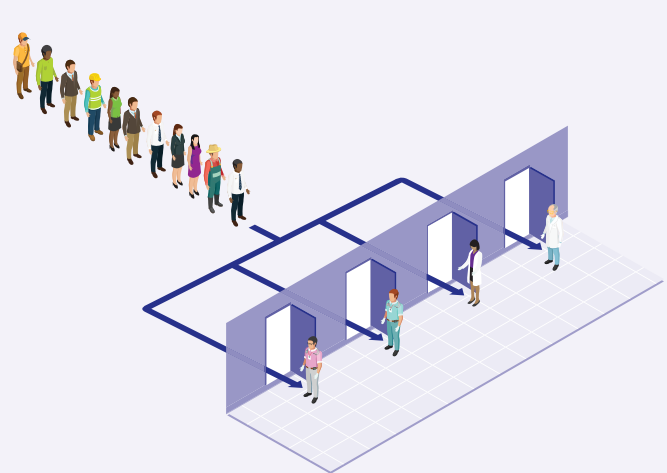
The Novari system allows specialists to provide care for patients at home or at a local hospital while still on a waiting list; the platform has helped the North West region complete 2,500 of these virtual visits. A patient can visit a local hospital, and with the assistance of a nurse, connect with a specialist located at another hospital. This option is a convenient way to schedule follow-ups and other appointments as part of a patient’s overall care plan.

Novari’s paperless structure also eliminates the human error that saw misdirected referral requests lost in stacks of paper on a physician’s desk. Fanti reports that with the help of Novari, the North West region has eliminated separate “waiting lists in filing cabinets on each site.” Having all the requests in one place makes it easier for hospitals to plan their operating room time and assess how many patients they’re serving in a given period. When determining how much time is required to schedule a case, Novari eRequest® provides recommendations based on data, leading to more efficient operating room scheduling. By doing so, Novari reduces the administrative burden on medical practitioners, reduces patient wait and drive times, and improves the scheduling of operating room times at each facility.



A **direct** or  
point-to-point system.

or



A **central intake** or single point  
of entry system.

# Novari Access to Care Integrated Software Platform™



Novari eRequest® is powered by the Canadian cloud-based capabilities of Microsoft Azure. Michael Nedvidek, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Novari Health, explains that "as a partner, Microsoft offers us early access to technology, assistance in leveraging technology for growing the business, and a pool of technology partners that we can draw from to push forward the innovation with our products." The flexible system has made it easy to scale the Novari software platform without compromising the security of sensitive patient data.

Fanti has seen the success of these solutions firsthand. "It gives us great confidence to know that Novari uses the Microsoft cloud which lets us count on reliability, security, and scalability." After seeing wait times drop for patients awaiting hip and knee surgery, the team is taking steps to apply the same Novari digital solutions to spine, shoulder, foot, and ankle surgeries.

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— Caroline Fanti: Director, Orthopedic Program, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre



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