

**Title:** Addressing Patient and Staff Safety: Implementation of a Behavioural Escalation Response Team  
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**Abstract:**

In hospital settings, behavioural escalations pose significant safety risks to staff and patients. Behavioural escalation incidents can result in restraint use, patient or staff injury. Patients admitted to hospital may exhibit responsive, agitated, or aggressive behaviours, either as a result of pre-existing mental health diagnoses, underlying medical concern or both. Early intervention strategies are pivotal to the prevention of behavioural emergencies, thus leading to reduction in harm for patients and staff. However, efforts in hospital to reduce patient escalation is focused mainly on a reactive versus a proactive approach. In order to provide a proactive approach to behavioural escalation and provide person-centered care, a Behavioural Escalation Response Team (BERT) was implemented at Unity Health Toronto to improve patient and staff safety. Similar to the Critical Care Response Team, which is a dedicated critical care team providing medical support for medical emergencies, BERT provides an innovative proactive approach to providing behavioural support to address acute behavioural emergencies. BERT is led by a mental health advanced practice nurse and is a collaborative approach between the Consultation Liaison Psychiatry team and clinical staff on a medical unit. In addition, BERT promotes capacity building amongst clinical staff on medical units by utilizing a strength based approach in clinical teaching. Since program inception in April 2022, we have had 142 BERT calls (73 St. Michael's and 72 St. Joseph's) and 98% of the calls resulted in an improvement in patients behavioural presentation through de-escalation and preventing a code white. Ongoing evaluation through research and ongoing data collection is being conducted for program evaluation and continuous improvement.

Thank you for considering our submission to the Leadership Summit. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,

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