eHealth Newsletter

Privacy by Design – Protecting Personal Health Information in B.C.'s EHR

The Electronic Health Record is the cornerstone of the Province's eHealth strategy to deliver faster, safer and better healthcare to patients. When every British Columbian has an EHR they will each have a secure and private lifetime record of their key health history and care within the health system.

Only authorized health professionals will have access to patient records in the EHR. The range of those records will be defined by "role based access" meaning that the range of a patient's health information available to view will depend on the health professional's "role". For example, an x-ray technologist may see a patient's x-rays, but not their prescription history; while a pharmacist may see a patient's prescription history, but not their x-rays; and the patient's doctor may see both.

Privacy measures have been designed and built into B.C.'s EHR from the outset, in keeping with B.C. privacy legislation and privacy best practices.

Legislation That Protects Privacy

Patient information will be protected by privacy legislation that is among the strongest in Canada.

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) and the *Personal Information Privacy Act* (PIPA) both contain privacy rules that apply to personal health information, including:

- Rules limiting collection, use and disclosure of personal health information;
- The obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure personal health information is accurate and complete;
- The right of an individual to request correction of personal health information; and
- A duty to make reasonable security arrangements against such risks as unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure or disposal of personal health information.

The *E-Health (Personal Health Information Access and Protection of Privacy) Act* supplements FOIPPA and PIPA, and specifically limits access to a patient's EHR. The *E-Health Act* was developed to create a specific legislative framework governing access and privacy for health information electronic databases – known as "Health Information Banks". (continued…)

The *E-Health Act* balances the ability of health professionals to view patient records with the privacy rights of individuals. It gives individuals a degree of control over who their personal health information can be disclosed to by use of "Disclosure Directives".

Initially, patients will have the ability to mask the data within a particular health information bank. As the disclosure directive service evolves, additional features may be added such as the ability to specify those granted access.

Technology

Electronic health records are surrounded with strong and effective security measures including network security, strong authentication, intrusion detection systems, data encryption, system timeouts and secured remote access. All activity in EHRs is recorded in an audit log to ensure privacy protection.

In Case of Emergency

In urgent and emergency care settings, a disclosure directive can be overridden – when a health professional determines that a patient's personal health information is necessary for timely care and the patient is unable to provide it. However, no one outside an urgent or emergency care setting will be able to access personal health information without the patient providing the keyword to remove the disclosure directive.

Provincial Diagnostic Imaging Update

Summary of Project Activity

The regional diagnostic imaging viewer was recently updated at Vancouver Coastal Health. This upgrade is an essential, preparatory step to enable the sharing of diagnostic images and

reports with the Fraser Health later this year. It also provides a foundation for the provincial diagnostic imaging solution being developed by the Ministry of Health Services.

Highlights

- 6,000 user accounts upgraded;
- 6,400 workstations and 18 servers upgraded across 10 sites from Richmond to Bella Coola; and
- Upgrade completed 18 hours ahead of schedule.

Next Steps

The lessons learned during the Vancouver Coastal Health upgrade will be documented and available to guide future upgrades and system enhancements. This information will support the next phase of planning with Fraser Health as both health authorities work towards the sharing of and access to images across health authorities. Ongoing consultation with clinicians will be a key element in this planning process.

PITO Update

The Provincial Information Technology Office (PITO) is coordinating the implementation of electronic medical records in physician's practices across the province.

Two thousand physicians are now enrolled in the program, almost half of the total of 4,000 - 4,500 expected by 2012. Approximately 1,000 have completed the orientation and chosen their electronic medical record software vendor. Approximately 235 physicians are now "live", with more implementations being planned by vendors and practices over the coming months. More details are available on the PITO website at www.pito.bc.ca.
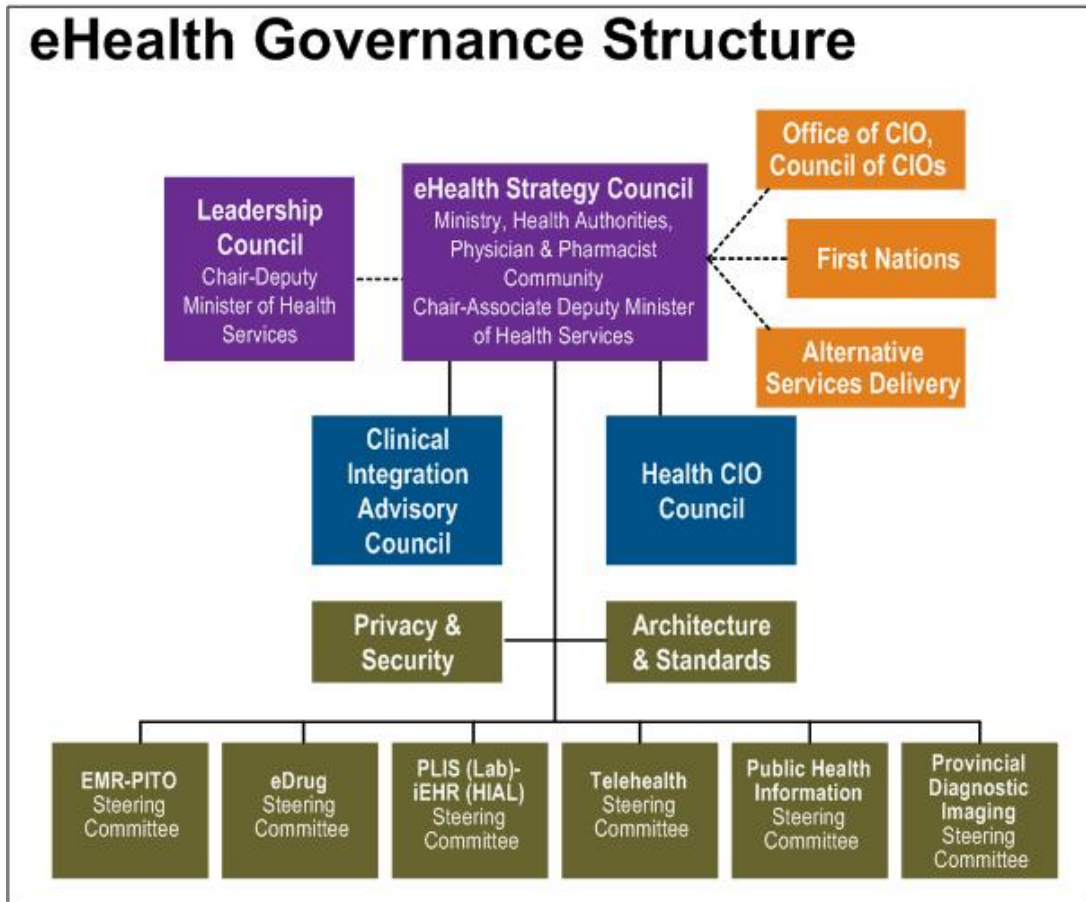
eHealth Governance Update

Over the past year the organizations partnering to sustain B.C.'s health system have continued to work together to bring the eHealth vision closer to reality.

The Ministry of Health Services continues to lead the process, and the organizations that deliver healthcare across B.C. continue to help guide our efforts – including the health authorities, health professionals, the First Nations Health Council, the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Pharmacists of B.C., the B.C. Medical Association and the Chief Information Officer for B.C., to name a few.

All of these organizations continue to participate on eHealth related councils and groups – and the council / group structure has evolved over the year to improve effectiveness. See page 4 for details.

eHealth Governance Structure

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eHealth Governance Groups Primer

The **Leadership Council** is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Health, with members including health authority Chief Executive Officers and senior ministry officials. This group has ultimate responsibility for eHealth. The eHealth Strategy Council reports to this group.

The Leadership Council provides advice on the provision of health services in British Columbia. They develop common strategies, philosophies and principles on a wide-range of major provincial issues relating to the strategic direction, management and accountability of the regionalized health care system.

Under the direction of the Deputy Minister, the Leadership Council takes a leadership role in the strategic shifts required to move to a planned and well-managed health system which is responsive to patient and population needs, managed within the fiscal realities and accountable to the public for results.

The **eHealth Strategy Council's** members are key representatives from the ministry, health authorities and physician & pharmacy community groups. Members are responsible for providing health system leadership and not organizational representation. Chaired by B.C.'s Associate Deputy Minister of Health, this group develops clinical and administrative strategy for the health system.

The **Clinical Integration Advisory Council** advises the eHealth Strategy Council on clinical requirements, processes and considerations for designing, developing, implementing and evaluating eHealth initiatives. This group consists of active health professionals with eHealth linkages.

The **Health CIO Council** includes the Chief Information Officers responsible for B.C.'s six health authorities and is chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for eHealth. This group provides input and advice on system design, development and implementation, including messaging/standards, architecture, security, managed operations, networking and related technology capabilities to support eHealth.

The **Privacy & Security** group within the Ministry of Health Services focuses on harmonizing privacy and security principles and policy in support of the efficient, cost-effective sharing of healthcare information in B.C. They foster awareness among the health authorities and the Ministry of Health Services of initiatives and issues related to the security and privacy of health information in B.C.

The **Architecture** group within the Ministry of Health Services is accountable for eHealth initiative architecture and standards leadership. They provide architecture and standards consulting, guidance and expertise to eHealth, and represent B.C. eHealth at national eHealth / shared health record standards groups.

The **eHealth Project Steering Committees** work with the Strategy Council. They are responsible for providing guidance to their project teams on design/build based on the project scope approved by the Strategy Council.