

eHealth *matters*

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Updates and news from British Columbia's developing eHealth projects for those working on eHealth projects and initiatives

eHealth and PharmaNet

— Building Electronic Health Records for B.C. Residents

The vision...

To improve the delivery of patient care in British Columbia by expanding the use of electronic medication information management to facilitate seamless care across all care settings.

The plan...

To upgrade and enhance the existing well respected PharmaNet system, and integrate its services with eHealth components.

As described in our previous [eDrug Project Progress Report](#), PharmaNet—the province-wide computer network linking pharmacies and other health care sites to a central Ministry of Health database—will soon be significantly upgraded as part of the Ministry of Health's eHealth initiative.

Our last report focused on how eHealth will affect PharmaNet and how patient information will continue to be secured. It also identified the key players in the eDrug Project. In this report, we'll focus on related eHealth projects, discuss some of the benefits of the eHealth initiative, provide more detail on specific changes to PharmaNet, and update you on current activities.

How does the eDrug Project fit into eHealth?

eHealth is the overarching term used to describe electronic health services delivered or enhanced through secure, shared Electronic Health Records (EHRs). eHealth supports and enables a more effective, integrated and coordinated approach to information sharing among all health professionals and health organizations. The provincial EHR is an integrated record of a patient's medical information and will include information such as medication history, lab results and diagnostic imaging information. Physicians, pharmacists and other health care professionals will have authorized and secure access anywhere, anytime, to only that information in an individual's provincial EHR that they need to know in order to provide safe and appropriate care.

The eHealth initiative will develop the infrastructure and interfaces necessary to collect and store provincial EHR information in central databases where it can be securely accessed by authorized health care professionals such as physicians and pharmacists. The eDrug Project will deliver the enhancements to PharmaNet resulting in more complete and securely accessible medication histories in the provincial EHR.

OTHER eHEALTH PROJECTS

The eDrug project is tightly linked to other eHealth projects that will bring together information vital to effective EHRs. These include:

Interoperable Electronic Health Record (iEHR)—The iEHR routes clinical messages between Point of Care systems and eHealth repositories and enables authorized access to eHealth information.

Provincial Laboratory Information Solution (PLIS)—Will provide a comprehensive repository of patient lab test results to authorized clinicians.

Connecting Digital Images (DI)—Connecting DI will provide seamless access to diagnostic images and reports to authorized users regardless of where in B.C. the exam took place.

Electronic Medical Record (EMR)—An EMR is a physician office-based system used to store and retrieve clinical information about patients in that practice. Physicians will be able to use their EMR systems to access the full provincial EHR including ePrescribing.

What is ePrescribing? Where does it fit in?

A key enhancement to PharmaNet under the eDrug Project is the introduction of electronic prescribing ("ePrescribing").

ePrescribing will be implemented in alignment with the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) project (see sidebar), allowing prescribers in medical offices throughout B.C. to enter prescriptions into their EMR system and have them automatically transferred to PharmaNet. PharmaNet will check the prescription against the patient's existing medication profile and identify potential issues such as drug interactions or allergies. Any problem can then be dealt with by the prescriber immediately.

Community pharmacies must be able to pick up prescriptions through the new PharmaNet system before prescribers can take advantage of the ePrescribing capability. We anticipate that the new system will be deployed in pharmacies starting in 2008.

Will there be changes to the claims component of PharmaNet?

Yes. Changes to the claims component will enable ePrescribers and pharmacists to view the PharmaCare benefit status or Special Authority criteria applicable to the drug they wish to prescribe or dispense to a patient. Processing of most Special Authority requests will save time for prescribers and add convenience for patients. A new messaging standard will allow for greater detail in the information entered and stored in PharmaNet.

Benefits to Patients and Health Care Professionals

The benefits of the eDrug Project include:

- **Enhanced patient safety**—Fewer adverse drug events as a result of more complete medication profiles and more accurate communication of prescriptions.
- **Improved coordination of care**—Greater continuity of medication care across all clinical settings will be possible.
- **Reduced treatment delays and faster delivery of care**—Health care providers will be able to quickly address drug allergy or drug interaction issues and will have access to PharmaCare coverage information.
- **Enhanced decision making**—Health care providers will have access to complete patient medication profiles and treatment history. Online clinical support tools will alert health care providers to potential clinical issues.
- **More efficient use of health care providers' time**—Reduced calls between prescriber's offices and pharmacists to clarify handwritten prescriptions.
- **Empowered patients**—Patients will be able to participate in their care by monitoring and, in the longer term, contributing to their medication record.

What activities are underway?

- **Keeping stakeholders involved—**
 - **eDrug Pharmacy Advisory Committee**—In January, the eDrug Pharmacy Advisory Committee was formed to provide recommendations and business input to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Pharmaceutical Services, including implementation plans. This vital stakeholder group will advise on the matters that are most important to the community pharmacy sector. The Committee includes representatives from the College of Pharmacists of BC and the BC Pharmacy Association.
 - **eDrug Steering Committee**—In January, the committee welcomed its newest member. The Committee now includes a representative from the College of Registered Nurses of BC.
 - **eDrug Clinical Working Group**—This group includes representatives of health authority pharmacists, the College of Pharmacists of BC, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of BC, the College of Registered Nurses of BC, the BC Medical Association and the BC Pharmacy Association. The group is working closely with the Ministry's system integrator to confirm the business and configuration requirements for the enhancements to PharmaNet.
- **Planning eHealth Deployment with Health Authorities**—Representatives from the health authorities have been involved in integrated eHealth deployment planning workshops over the last few months. In our next newsletter, we'll update you on the outcome of this important planning activity.
- **Working with software organizations**—To ensure the transition from existing community pharmacy software to new pharmacy software is as effective and efficient as possible, we continue to work with the organizations that supply or support pharmacy software. Our recent information sessions provided these organizations with an overview of planned enhancements to PharmaNet and with the initial implementation guide. Adoption of the new pan-Canadian clinical and financial messaging standards for the exchange of electronic medication information is a significant change for these organizations so we are providing as much lead time as possible.
- **Expanding PharmaNet Access**—Expanding access to PharmaNet is a fundamental component of the eHealth and eDrug vision for sharing health information. Hospital Access to PharmaNet (HAP) is the expansion of access to the existing PharmaNet system for physicians and pharmacists in hospitals and designated mental health facilities. This new service is a key stepping stone to the provincial EHR as it enables health care providers in these facilities to access a patient's medication record on PharmaNet.

Let's stay connected!

Please direct your questions, comments or ideas for this newsletter to the eDrug Project team at:

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