Ministry of Health Services

eHealth Snapshot

B.C.'s eHealth program is about using information technology to provide the best possible patient care.

The Province has eight eHealth projects underway that that will, in a gradual phased implementation starting in 2009, bring lab test results, diagnostic images and medication histories, online to help patients anywhere health care is delivered in B.C.

eHealth will implement secure electronic health record systems to:

- Bring faster, safer, better, healthcare to British Columbians by giving authorized health professionals electronic access to secure, complete patient health records when and where they deliver care;
- Assure that access to patient information will be restricted to only those having a legal right, in accordance with provincial eHealth privacy protection policies; and
- Provide health information only to authorized health professionals through secure networks to reduce delays, errors, test duplication and financial and environmental costs.

All patient information will be protected by privacy measures that are among the strongest in Canada. The personal health information in the electronic health record will comply with the Province's e-Health (Personal Health Information Access and Protection of Privacy) Act , the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Information Privacy Act*.

Key Benefits for Patients

Today, patient health information is locked away in hospitals and doctors' offices in paper records, x-ray films and other forms that cannot be easily shared. eHealth will bring that information to health professionals' fingertips using electronic health records. For example:

- eHealth will allow a patient and her physician to have a telehealth consultation with a Vancouver specialist. The specialist views the patient's lab tests on line and prescribes for a pharmacist in Terrace online. Her physician reviews the patient's recent diagnostic scans on an EMR from the electronic health record and updates the course of treatment.
- eHealth will help the teenager with spina bifida who lives in Hixon and travels to Prince George to have a CT scan and blood tests. His local doctor will see the same information through secure networks in Hixon as the specialist in Prince George or Vancouver.

Only patients and authorized health professionals will be able to see personal medical information – no one else. B.C.'s eHealth electronic health record will be protected by tough security and privacy legislation that creates an effective balance between individual rights and public responsibilities in electronic health record management.

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Patients will benefit from eHealth through:

- Improved access to a broad range of health information, to help them stay healthy and actively manage their own care;
- Better access to specialized services and care;
- Better quality care and fewer treatment delays;
- The removal of distance as a barrier to care; and
- Not being subjected to duplicate, sometimes risky medical test procedures.

Key Benefits For Health Professionals

Physicians will have more complete patient information and better access to a wide range of resources and practice management tools. They will have access to higher quality data and analysis tools, to support clinical and management decision-making.

eHealth will facilitate:

- Making appointments and storing patient information;
- Reviewing, highlighting and adding information to patient charts;
- Communicating with laboratories and other medical professionals and specialists;
- Receiving patients' lab test results;
- Receiving reports from other medical professionals and specialists;
- Monitoring and managing chronic disease treatment;
- Identifying potential drug interactions;
- Protecting physicians and pharmacists from the repercussions of catastrophic errors stemming from illegible handwriting; and
- Sending prescriptions directly to pharmacies for quicker dispensing.

Key Benefits For Government

Government will be able to:

- Enhance health care planning and stewardship based on reliable, accurate and consistent information;
- Increase efficiency and refine the health system by having access to better information;
- Achieve savings by eliminating duplication and directing health care at patient needs; and
- Sustain health care delivery by extending specialist services and skills.

B.C.'s health system will become more accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable.

B.C.'s Health System Needs eHealth

We need eHealth to face a number of significant challenges. The pressures on our health system are intense, and will only increase in the future.

Demographics

- There is a growing prevalence in our population of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

- Our population is growing – by just under 50,000 persons per year – and is expected to reach almost 4.5 million by 2010. Between 2005 and 2015 our over 65 population will grow by 24.4 per cent, from 13.9 per cent to 17.3 per cent.

- Life expectancy is increasing: in 2005, the median age at death was 79 years and by 2015, it is expected to be more than 81 years. At the same time, our health care workforce is aging. Maintaining an adequate supply and mix of health professionals and workers will be an ongoing challenge.

Expectations

- Our hospitals and health professionals face a continuous need to update or expand health facilities, technology and equipment; and new diseases (such as SARS), tests, drugs and treatments continue to emerge. An 80 year old today is twice as likely to have a knee replacement, coronary bypass, or cataract surgery as 15 years ago, and eight times as likely to have an angioplasty procedure.

Costs

- All these factors will increase demands and costs to our health system. Moving health information online will reduce delays, errors, test duplication and financial and environmental costs associated with the physical transportation of records. eHealth will enable "green" efficiencies that will help sustain B.C.'s health system into the future.

Implementing eHealth

British Columbia will realize the vision for eHealth by:

- Establishing strong governance and leadership;
- Fostering collaboration and joint procurement;
- Leveraging available financial resources;
- Safeguarding privacy and security;
- Building on British Columbia's existing health information technology foundation; and
- Implementing eHealth in phases.

eHealth Domain Projects

Successful implementation of eHealth relies on a number of projects that are being developed in parallel. These projects are either "*foundational",* providing the foundation to support all of eHealth; or "*clinical",* meeting high priority patient needs.

Foundational Phase 1 projects include:

- ***interoperable Electronic Health Record Project*** – will deliver a private and secure electronic health record service for B.C. that will enable health professionals to share data electronically.

- **Registries Integration Project** – will ensure that eHealth can accurately uniquely identify both patients and care providers across the health system.
- **Physicians' Information Technology Office Program** – PITO will provide electronic medical record and practice management systems for physicians' offices, replacing today's largely paper-based health records and enabling staff to access B.C.'s electronic health record.

Clinical Phase 1 projects include:

- **Provincial Laboratory Information Solution** – PLIS will provide a province-wide repository for all patient lab test results, from public and private labs.
- **eDrug Project** – Building on the success of B.C.'s existing PharmaNet system, the eDrug project will introduce the next generation system (PharmaNet eRx) providing electronic prescribing functions and improved medication profile content.
- **Diagnostic Imaging Project** – will provide a province-wide repository for digital (filmless) diagnostic images and reports.
- **Public Health Surveillance Project** – will implement Panorama – the new Pan-Canadian health surveillance system, as well as systems to support family health and environmental health / health protection.
- **Telehealth Project** – will deliver improved health care for citizens by removing distance as a barrier to health services across British Columbia.

eHealth Across Canada

The British Columbia eHealth initiative is not happening in isolation. B.C., along with other jurisdictions across the country, is participating in a ten year plan led by Canada Health Infoway to create a safer and more efficient healthcare system.

eHealth is recognized both nationally and internationally as an essential part of the infrastructure for a more efficient and effective health care delivery system, and projects that are similar to the projects under way within Canada are taking place around the globe to bring electronic health services to populations.

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments, through strategic investment from Canada Health Infoway, are fostering and accelerating the development and adoption of eHealth information systems in Canada. B.C.'s eHealth approach and architecture conform to the Canada Health Infoway blueprint for pan-Canadian eHealth.

Contact

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