



For British Columbia's PharmaNet Users

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We have heard from many of you about the impact that the PharmaNet connection issues had on your operations and we acknowledge the problems it created for everyone who was affected. We would like to explain what happened and update you on the measures that the Ministry is taking to reduce the risk of similar malfunctions.

What happened

Between December 26 and 28, 2010 approximately 200 pharmacies, as well as hospitals and community medical practices, reported problems connecting to PharmaNet. Only organizations using the HN Client application to connect to PharmaNet were affected.

The problems were caused by the failure of a Government Domain Name Server (DNS). As a result of the failure, the HN Client application could not connect to PharmaNet and returned an error message. Impacted points of service were unable to successfully submit claims or retrieve medication histories.

Service was restored the evening of December 28 when another server was substituted for the failed hardware.

What is the Ministry doing to reduce the risk of re-occurrence

We have carried out a post-incident review and recommended improvements in the following areas:

1. **Technical corrections**, such as correlating various dependent settings and identifying automation opportunities for recovery of failed systems
2. **Documentation improvements**, including sharing system architecture with the various parties involved in supporting the resolution of incidents, and updating help desk troubleshooting scripts
3. **Enhanced after-hours support procedures**, specific to escalation and prioritization of PharmaNet incidents

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The use of PharmaNet is not intended as a substitute for professional judgment. Information on PharmaNet is not exhaustive and cannot be relied upon as complete. The absence of a warning about a drug or drug combination is not an indication that the drug or drug combination is safe, appropriate or effective in any given patient. Health care professionals should confirm information obtained from PharmaNet, and ensure no additional relevant information exists, before making patient care decisions.

4. Enhanced reporting and communication between the Ministry and Shared Services BC
(the agency that manages the Province's network infrastructure).

To date we have already completed work on some of these recommendations, such as system configurations, sharing of PharmaNet architectural information and revising escalation procedures. Ministry representatives and Shared Services BC (SSBC) staff are continuing their work with other partners in determining next steps.

At the same time, the Ministry is reviewing how we deal with problems of this kind from a holistic perspective. The aim is to reduce the probability of future connectivity problems and reduce the time it takes to find a solution in order to avoid or mitigate as much as possible any impact on end-users.

We apologize for the inconvenience this problem caused and thank you for your patience during our investigation of this incident.