Alberta
*Net**care***
ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

EHR – "...it just made too much sense."

The Pharmacist at one of Calgary's busiest locations, adjacent to the Eighth & Eighth medical clinic, David Brewerton was an early champion of the idea of an electronic health record. He remains a leading proponent of the information system that connects doctors and pharmacists to critical patient information.

"The concept of an electronic health record just made too much sense for me not to get behind it," Brewerton said. "It saves us time, trouble and frustration; and it's safer for the patient."

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>
> *David Brewerton*

Alberta Netcare Portal, the province-wide electronic health record, is currently serving more than 12,500 health care providers, including more than 1,400 pharmacists. For pharmacists, this means instant access to their patients' medical profiles. The information includes drugs prescribed (current and historic) and dispensed. Soon, pharmacists will also have access to their patients' lab test result information to assist them in providing advice to patients. More information about the access to lab results will be provided over the coming weeks and in the next issue of this newsletter.

Brewerton points out a situation where an accurate record pays safety dividends. "For example, take the case of an elderly patient who arrives in an emergency ward and isn't able to remember what medication she is on," Brewerton said. "She may say, 'I take a pink one and two white ones;' but that doesn't help the nurse. With Alberta Netcare, the nurse can pull up the woman's record and see what medications she is on. It just makes a lot of sense." It also means that patients can receive the most appropriate treatment more quickly.

The system is also invaluable when dealing with prescriptions. "With Netcare we know right away if the patient has existing prescriptions. The system flags duplicates, allergies or any unmanaged contraindications," he said. The system also supports physicians filling out prescriptions electronically, instantly flagging potential adverse drug interactions. In the future, once federal legislation permits, these prescriptions could be made available to pharmacies electronically instead of by paper, saving time and potential errors.

REMOVING THE GUESSWORK FROM SELECTING A PHYSICIAN OFFICE SYSTEM

The Physician Office System Program's (POSP) Vendor Conformance and Usability Requirements (VCUR) help take the guesswork out of selecting a physician office system.

To keep pace with regional and provincial developments in the e-health environment, the process POSP uses to set and revise VCUR is changing. Some changes will come into effect now; others will be identified as the strategic direction is developed for future versions of VCUR.

Pharmacists currently use a program developed by their pharmacy system vendor to upload prescription information on a daily basis; but eventually the uploading will become real time. "The key," he said, "is that Netcare is another tool we can use to make decisions about patient care, using more complete information."

Brewerton is realistic about the system and readily admits that it isn't perfect. "It relies on correct data entry, so occasionally you find yourself looking for alternate name spellings, incorrectly typed dates, that sort of thing," he said, "but as more and more data is entered, the system becomes more and more valuable."

One factor impacting the rollout of Alberta Netcare across the province, Brewerton said, is the availability of high-speed Internet. Alberta is tackling that with the recent completion of Supernet, the high speed Internet infrastructure currently serving 420 communities across the province. Internet service providers are now being established in these communities to connect users like community pharmacists to Supernet.

Alberta Netcare is beginning a limited release of its 2006 Portal in March to 400 pre-selected user sites. That will be followed by the full rollout of the Netcare 2006 Portal in May. Deployment teams are working across the province to prepare health care offices.

REGIONAL NEWS

ALBERTA NETCARE INCLUDES INITIATIVES LED BY THE REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES. EACH ISSUE, WE WILL BRING YOU UPDATES FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE.

News From RSHIP

RSHIP, Alberta's Regional Shared Health Information Program, is designed to improve the exchange of patient information throughout Alberta's seven rural health regions. Over time, the infrastructure put in place through RSHIP will support the province-wide exchange of key patient information through the Alberta Netcare Portal.

RSHIP is a collaboration between all health regions excluding Capital and Calgary Health regions to create a single, integrated, electronic medical record encompassing all aspects of health service for patients within these regions. Instituted in May 2004, RSHIP replaces multitudes of separate, non-integrated clinical information systems such as pharmacy tracking, laboratory test results, diagnostic imaging and transcribed results.

RSHIP serves:
- population of 1,040,000 (approx 1/3 of province)
- 108 Facilities (Acute and Continuing Care)
- 79 Home Care Offices
- 96 Public Health Offices.

The RSHIP partnership is a unique joining of seven separate legal entities in an interdependent relationship, designed to more-efficiently serve those accessing health services. RSHIP regions share an integrated suite of clinical applications, replacing hundreds of stand-alone legacy systems. The integrated clinical systems will ensure that safer, higher-quality, error-reducing decisions are made at the point where care is being delivered.

To date, two regions (David Thompson and Northern Lights health regions) have gone live with Phase I; the full replacement of core clinical systems. The remaining five regions will go live during the spring and summer of 2006. At the same time, RSHIP will develop the most appropriate ways to link key data to the Alberta Netcare Portal to serve local RSHIP health care providers' offices as well as specialists providing services to RSHIP patients in non-RSHIP regions.

Once the RSHIP core systems are up and running, RSHIP regions will begin to launch sophisticated clinical systems that will ensure higher quality, and higher safety in the delivery of care.

News from Capital Health

Capital Health continues to lead the delivery and deployment of the Alberta Netcare Portal 2006, and will be conducting a Limited Production Rollout (LPR) with several health regions to gain initial feedback on the system, deployment and training processes.

A system test of the Portal 2006 will be completed later this month (January) and the user acceptance test, which includes participants from all stakeholders, will be completed by early February, making way for the LPR in March.

No guesswork...

First, major new requirements for physician office systems will be added to VCUR as they are developed, instead of waiting for the next VCUR cycle. When there are significant enough changes, a new version of VCUR will be issued and vendors will be given at least six months to conform. Shortening these timeframes will make VCUR a 'living' set of requirements and help physicians gain maximum clinical benefit from their systems.

POSP will also develop a process to ensure vendors deploy their new VCUR-compliant software versions to clinics in a timely manner. This will become more important as the strategic health information initiatives underway through Alberta Netcare take shape and roll-out. Physicians need to have the latest version of their software installed to get the most out of their electronic medical records and to ensure they are able to meet their POSP outcomes.

Over the next few months, the Physician Office Vision 2008 project will articulate an information technology vision for physician office systems based on current and projected business requirements, desired functionality and technical requirements.

Reminder for physicians: POSP Phase 2 ends on March 31, 2006 and physicians accepted into the program by this date will be eligible for 48 months of funding and a range of change management and technical services. The last date for physicians to submit their application to POSP is March 8, 2006. More information is available on the POSP website at **www.albertadoctors.org/posp** or by contacting the POSP at **780.452.1616** or **1.866.817.3875**.

In Capital Health, five sites have been selected to participate in the LPR: 1) Meadowlark Clinic, 2) University of Alberta Hospital, Intensive Care Unit, 3) Misericordia Hospital, Diabetes Education Centre; 4) Royal Alexandra Hospital Renal Clinic (part of the Northern Alberta Renal Program); and 4) the Sturgeon Hospital Emergency Department.

Four other regions will participate. The LPR will include the following data and functionality:

• viewing lab results and transcribed reports, cumulative and graph reports, flowsheets, patient lists
• existing Capital Health data (lab results, transcribed reports, event history, immunization history)
• improved search functionality and worklists
• live feed of province's Person Directory data to enable comprehensive person lookup
• Northern Lights, Aspen and East Central Health Regions lab data

• Alberta Cancer Board (ACB) Northern Alberta lab data and ACB province-wide transcribed report data
• access to full Pharmaceutical Information Network (PIN) functionality
• improved privacy and masking functionality
• ability to context launch Portal 2006 from physician EMRs

The good news for Capital Health users of netCARE and Alberta Netcare Portal 2004 is that they will now use just one system and be able to launch PIN through the new Portal 2006 with a single sign on, enabling access to community drug information on patients across the province's health regions.

Capital Health has selected a regional coordinator to work with the Alberta Health and Wellness deployment team to plan the launch and rollout of Portal 2006 for this region.

Until Alberta Netcare Portal 2006 is available later this spring, progress on the regional netCARE continues with the delivery of some enhancements. Updated pathology system reports went live in October 2005 and in early 2006, pathology and lab reports from the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton will go live. Alberta Cancer Board transcribed reports are expected to become live shortly thereafter.

Capital Health continues to monitor the access and use of netCARE. Since the full roll out of netCARE nearly two years ago, data suggests physicians are progressively relying on netCARE to view information they used to access from older systems.

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Contact us

To contact us for more information call 1-866-756-2647, or visit the Alberta Netcare website at **www.albertanetcare.ca**

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