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Alberta Netcare pioneer sees great potential in province-wide system

Dr. Tim Kolotyluk and three other physicians run a rural practice in a completely computerized clinic in Westlock, Alberta. Since his pioneer involvement in the Pharmaceutical Information Network (PIN), Kolotyluk has played an important role in helping Alberta's many physicians automate their practices.

Kolotyluk made history in 2002 when he became Alberta's first physician to create an electronic prescription in Netcare's drug information tool called PIN.

An automated office helps him sort his information more effectively and helps save time. "When a patient comes in I am able to look up my electronic lab charts, review and check whether consultant appointments were set up and sort the results from consultant appointments," says Kolotyluk. "The electronic system has helped my practice tremendously. With paper charts the process is too long and not result orientated."

He values Alberta Netcare's ability to warn the user of any drug-to-drug interactions. "It tells you not to use two drugs together. I have a tool to help me manage the care of my patients." He says the PIN tool has come a long way since 2002. Ongoing feedback from users has helped to upgrade and enhance PIN to the stable and sophisticated application it is today.

Looking up lab results in Netcare is a huge time saver for Kolotyluk. "I don't have to make a telephone call to get those results. I have the information through Netcare. I also use PIN to check on medication profiles for my patients."

When Alberta Health and Wellness announced an upgraded version of Alberta Netcare - Portal 2006, Kolotyluk was ready to jump on board and be part of the team to test the enhanced application. "The new version is fantastic. I use it to look up diagnostic imaging text reports for my patients," he explains. This applies to results for patients visiting from the



DR. TIM KOLOTYLUK, PEMBINA MEDICAL CLINIC, WESTLOCK

Capital region and others referred to get their tests done in Edmonton. With the successful completion of this pilot project the Netcare deployment team is rolling out the application across the province.

Kolotyluk says Netcare will reach its full potential once it can exchange information with his EMR in real time. "Today I have to download information from Netcare, then save it in a format that allows me to upload it to the patient profile in my EMR." He is looking forward to better integration of these important tools to help regional providers access to important patient information.

Alberta Health and Wellness is working closely with physician office system vendors to deploy the integrated version in physician offices across the province. Once completed and fully functional, physicians will be able to download key patient information including recorded medications, allergies, drug intolerances, lab test results and patient demographics directly from Alberta Netcare into their office computer system.



WHAT SAFEGUARDS ARE PART OF ALBERTA NETCARE (EHR)?

The following are in place to ensure security and privacy for patients:

- All access to records is audited and all electronic messages are encrypted.
- The information in EHR is secure based on ISO 17799 standards, the international standard for information security.
- Firewalls and intrusion detection systems are in place and alert the appropriate personnel of any unusual activity.



REGIONAL NEWS

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

Peace Country Health

Alberta Netcare is giving Vishal Sharma a better picture of his patients and he expects that image will get clearer as more information is added to the system with the arrival of Portal 2006.

The Sexsmith pharmacist said he has long looked forward to the day where there is a comprehensive central database of patient information that can be accessed from anywhere in the province.

When customers come in with a new prescription he's going to be able to view their medication history. "I can check and see if there is an interaction between that and their current medication program," he said at his pharmacy in the small community north of Grande Prairie.

He's not going to have to worry about tracking down various physician offices to see what medications a client may be using, saving him time and allowing him to provide better service to customers.

"This is long overdue," he said, adding that being able to access lab information and other health data will make Alberta Netcare more valuable to health care professionals. As pharmacists' scope of practice broadens, Netcare is going to become a more essential tool.

Physicians are also looking forward to the new system. Lana deBoon, clinic administrator at the Associate Medical Clinic in Peace River, said Alberta Netcare Portal 2006 will expand the amount of information it provides to doctors and clinic staff.

With 11 physicians practising out of it, the north western Alberta clinic had its own Electronic Health Record system in place for about four years. The physicians watched closely the advances the province was making towards creating a province-wide Electronic Health Record.

They currently use Portal 2004 daily and have been pleased with what the system can do for them. "We find it very helpful to find lab results and patient demographics," deBoon said. "It's also user-friendly. It's not that hard to get into," she added. "It is really easy to use," agreed Sharma, noting most pharmacy software is more difficult to learn than the Netcare system.

With Portal 2006 coming to Peace Country Health in January, deBoon sees greater efficiencies and patient care being the result. Expanding the system's ability to deal with drug information alone will make a big difference. "I'll use it a lot more," agreed Sharma. "Being able to send prescriptions directly to pharmacies and access information about what medications a patient is on is going to be a huge improvement," added deBoon.

In Peace River, which is a centre for a number of smaller communities, the clinic sees patients who may have been sent for tests in their hometown. The doctors often do not know what tests were already done so, to be safe, they send the patient for more tests.

With Alberta Netcare in place, physicians will know what tests were done and get the results. "It's more efficient and provides better care for the patient. As the various systems and databases across the province

PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (PIA) AND ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT (ORA)

All across the province, Transition Coordinators are assisting physicians and pharmacists in the process of submitting their Organizational Readiness Assessments (ORA) and guiding them to contact the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner on requirements for submitting their Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA).

So, what's the difference between a PIA and ORA? Each focuses on a different element of the protection of the information within the system. The PIA is primarily concerned with how you collect, store, and access protected information. In a physician office the PIA includes how you access and transmit information including firewalls, passwords and computer procedures. The ORA is required by pharmacists and community medical clinics. By completing an ORA, physicians and pharmacists are ensuring that their computing environment has the security controls in place to help protect patient information. Together, the PIA and the ORA form a comprehensive analysis of your data management systems.

These two assessments form the backbone of the security of Alberta Netcare Electronic Health Records. They are designed to ensure you

have the proper security in place to protect your patients' personal information. When these two security steps are complete, you can start using Alberta Netcare Portal 2006.

This fall, many medical clinics and pharmacies completed their PIAs and ORAs. Situated in each of the health regions throughout the province, they are now ready to join Alberta Netcare Portal 2006.

Many clinics have already completed their PIAs with the assistance of the Physician Office System Program (POSP). Since 2001, POSP has been providing financial, change management and technical support to help Alberta's physicians incorporate information technology into their practices. As part of this process, POSP provides physicians with assistance completing and submitting their PIAs.

In the coming months it is anticipated that thousands of physicians and pharmacies will be joining Alberta Netcare from Capital Health, the Calgary Health Region and all of the regions that comprise the Regional Shared Health Information Program (RSHIP).

To get your clinic or pharmacy ready to join, please contact the Alberta Netcare deployment team enrolment line at 1-866-756-2647. They will guide you through the step of completing your PIA and ORA. If your medical clinic is part of the POSP program please contact Ingrid Ruys-George, POSP's Privacy Compliance Officer at (780) 452-1616 ext 241.

become more integrated it's going to reduce a lot of duplication," said deBoon.

Integration will, for example, eliminate the need for staff to manually re-entering some lab data to ensure it is in the clinic's record system. It will also reduce the time clinic staff spend requesting patient records from other clinics. "I think that will save the health-care system a lot of money," commented deBoon. "It saves time, is accurate and the information is secure, added Sharma. If you're not authorized to access it, you're not going to get the information."

deBoon applauds the province taking the lead in the country with Alberta Netcare Electronic Health Records and hopes to see the project continue to expand. "I can only see it getting better," she concluded.





COMPUTER SECURITY, *THE HEALTH INFORMATION ACT* AND YOU

Why is computer security so important?

Two reasons – first, protecting your patients’ privacy has always been a priority for health care professionals. Putting files on computers can make them vulnerable to two types of unauthorized access: internal and external.

Second, the requirements under the *Health Information Act* (HIA) are very specific and the penalties are significant – up to a \$50,000 fine. This obligation to protect the confidentiality of health records must be taken seriously. In this regard the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta has asked that we bring your attention to charges that were recently laid under the HIA. A copy of the Commissioner’s media release outlining the charges can be located at:

http://www.oipc.ab.ca/ims/client/upload/NR_HIA_Charges_Nov_2006_1.pdf

Only authorized health care professionals are able to access Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and the Alberta Netcare Electronic Health Record (EHR). To protect against unauthorized internal access, it is important to take some simple steps:

- Password protect your computers
- Set expiration dates for your passwords to ensure change
- Never share your password with anyone in your office
- Make passwords difficult to guess by using case sensitive text and numbers or symbols

It is imperative that your network be protected through:

- A good firewall
- Password protection
- Intrusion detection system (spyware)



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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ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD



**Better Patient Information.
Better Care Decisions.**

Alberta