

The *Alberta Medical Association* (AMA), College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA), and Alberta Health (AH) identified the need for a frequently asked question (FAQ) document to explain the CII initiative and its implications, particularly to community physicians.



What is the CII initiative?

The primary goal of CII is to improve Albertan's continuity of care across the health system through better access to primary care and community health information. To achieve this goal CII will:

- collect health data from all primary care and community clinics in Alberta
- present this data in Alberta Netcare through clinically relevant reports
- make this data available for appropriate secondary use, such as quality improvement

The vision for Alberta Netcare is for it to function as a comprehensive, patient-focused application. The community based physician uses Alberta Netcare to access patient health information from other health-care providers (e.g. medication information, laboratory test results, diagnostic images and hospital visits). Healthcare providers, however, do not have access to patient information that is recorded in the community physician's EMR (e.g. health concerns, allergies, observations, clinical assessment, referrals, etc.). Access to primary care and community health information is also required for effective health systems planning and quality improvement efforts. The CII initiative addresses these information gaps.



What information will participating community clinics be contributing?

The information shared includes data elements in the community physician's EMR that are set out in the Health Information Standards Committee for Alberta (HISCA) EMR Data Content Standard <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/HISCA-PHC-EMR-Content.pdf>. This includes patient data (PHN, birthdate, gender), provider data (name, role, expertise, location), observations (health concerns, allergies, blood pressure, clinical assessment), immunizations and referrals. Additionally, the CII initiative makes specialist consult reports available to other care providers through Alberta Netcare. Future phases of the CII project will expand the scope of information sharing, including more data elements and additional clinical reports.



Will specialists be contributing the same information as family physicians?

Community specialists are asked if they would like to provide the same EMR data as family physicians, but this is not a requirement. The current focus is getting consult reports into Alberta Netcare.



What is a Community Encounter Digest (CED) report?

The CED report summarizes the care the patient received over the past 12 months from all community-based clinics in Alberta that participate in the CII program. This includes details on the following:

- Service providers
- Service delivery location
- Encounter (details)
- Observations (measurements and others)
- Interventions and treatment
- Referral requests
- Immunizations



Who designed the Community Encounter Digest and can it be changed?

The CED was designed by a clinical workgroup that included physicians from the AMA and CPSA. Based on consultations with physicians and other clinical stakeholders, additional data elements may be added in the future.



May we enter a report from Netcare (CED or other report) that was generated from another clinic into our clinic EMR or patient chart?

The HIA allows authorized custodians to access health information in Netcare essential to the treatment and care of their patients. Authorized custodians exercise control over the health information that is available to them through Netcare. As such, authorized custodians may enter health information from Netcare that was generated at other clinics into their own EMR or patient chart, as long as the information is relevant and essential to the treatment and care they are providing to the patient. Affiliates to authorized custodians should consult their site's policies and procedures on charting Netcare information and/or consult the relevant custodian before proceeding.



May we disclose reports from Netcare (CED or other report) that were entered into our own charts from Netcare?

If an authorized custodian puts information from Netcare into their own EMR system or patient chart, it becomes a part of their records, over which they exercise custody and control as a custodian. This means that the custodian may decide to disclose the Netcare information to a third party if the disclosure is authorized under the HIA.



Will community clinics get access to the data they shared?

Yes, clinics are able to see their data reflected in the reports published to Alberta Netcare. They can also review their data during the Limited Production Rollout (LPR) as part of the data validation process.



What is Alberta Health planning to do with the information community clinics provide?

Alberta Health, in consultation with AMA, CPSA, and other clinical partners, plans to use this information for appropriate data analysis purposes. This will include population health assessment, health system planning, quality improvement and research at the primary care level.



What if I want to share additional information?

If the physician adds new information to the encounter for that patient, the new information will be picked up in the next nightly EMR data extract and added to the information in Alberta Netcare. As well, in consultation with the AMA, CPSA and other clinical stakeholders, additional data elements and reports will be incorporated in the future.



What is the legal authority that allows disclosure of health information to Alberta Health?

The physician's disclosure of health information to Alberta Health is authorized under section 27 of the Health Information Act (HIA) for the following purposes:

- providing health services;
- planning and resource allocation;
- health system management;
- public health surveillance; and
- health policy development.

Under the provisions of section 35(1) (a) and 36(a) of the HIA, this information can be disclosed without patient consent.



What is the legal authority that allows disclosure of health information to other health service providers through Alberta Netcare?

The disclosure by Alberta Health to Alberta Netcare is covered under HIA section 35(1)(b) and 36(a) and is subject to the requirements of section 58(2) whereby if a patient asked his/her physician to limit the amount of health information that the physician discloses, the physician must consider these expressed wishes. The physician must then apply his/her professional judgment and weigh the patient's concern with any other important factors, such as patient safety, whether the information could be important to another provider, legal requirements, professional college standards and other factors. The physician must make a decision on what and whether to disclose the information and should tell the patient what the decision is.



What if a patient does not want his/her information shared?

Patients have the right to ask their physician to limit the amount of health information that they disclose. The physician must apply their professional judgment and weigh the patient's concern with any other important factors, such as patient safety, the potential importance of that information to another health care provider, legal requirements, professional college standards and other factors. The physician must make a decision and should tell the patient what their decision is. It is a best practice to document the decision in the EMR. Dependent on the decision reached by the physician and the capabilities of the physician's EMR, a particular encounter can be marked as confidential. In this case, the information will not be displayed in Netcare. The physician can also choose **not** to make a specialist consult report available to Netcare.



Will my clinic EMR Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) need to change?

No, Alberta Health has prepared a PIA that covers changes made to your clinic EMR system to accommodate disclosure of health information to CII. A synopsis of the Alberta Health PIA is provided during the sign-up process. Custodians are asked to sign an endorsement letter for the Alberta Health PIA, which explains that the clinic EMR system has been modified to support the data extraction process. The endorsement letter is sent to the Office of Information and Privacy Commissioner.



What privacy and security protections are in place for the data being shared?

Data is being transferred from the EMR vendor's hosting site to the Alberta Health data centre via a dedicated web service that uses strong encryption. The Alberta Health data centre meets high standards of data security with firewalls, intrusion detection, anti-malware systems and redundancy of power supply and hardware to ensure high availability and data integrity.



How will physicians know if this initiative is worth participating in?

The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) is conducting an independent evaluation of the CII initiative. Alberta Health, the AMA and the CPSA are also providing feedback to community physicians based on the results of the evaluation.



If a community clinic wants to participate, what is involved?

To participate, your clinic needs to be on Alberta Netcare already and have an EMR privacy impact assessment (PIA) and provincial Organizational Readiness Assessment (pORA) that reflects the current environment. Signing up is simple.

For further information, please contact us at:

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