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

Alberta

WELCOME TO A NEW FORUM FOR INFORMATION ON ALBERTA'S ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD.

Alberta doctors, pharmacists and health care professionals are leaders in information technology – a critically important element of health care in today's society.

This newsletter, which we will send out every two months, will provide information about Alberta Netcare and the numerous initiatives across the province related to improving health care through technology.

In the coming months, this newsletter will bring you regular updates on progress and plans from across the province. To access this newsletter online, visit **www.albertanetcare.ca**.

Tracking Netcare's progress across Alberta

The look and name of Alberta EHR changes, but not the functionality

In late October, Alberta Electronic Health Record (EHR) users noticed some changes to the look of the tool when they logged onto the system. The Alberta EHR is now called Alberta Netcare Portal 2004. While the name changes, all the functionality remains the same.

• User logins remain the same.
• The electronic health record performs exactly the same.
• The information is displayed exactly as it was before.

Over the next several months, all activities and initiatives supporting the electronic health record in Alberta will be referred to as Alberta Netcare.

The name 'Alberta Netcare' will provide the consistent identity that all health care providers in the province will come to recognize as supporting the province-wide electronic exchange of information.

Alberta Netcare includes the projects, products, programs and services that make possible Alberta's EHR. The Netcare name will be used to describe components already supporting the EHR across the province, such as the Alberta EHR, Capital Health's netCARE and the Physician Office System Program.

Because the EHR has many exciting projects emerging, it is important to introduce one province-wide name – Alberta Netcare – to consistently talk about the interconnected nature of these initiatives. This consolidation signals Alberta's commitment to building one EHR system that will efficiently link health care providers from across the province, helping them to work more effectively with patients as a multi-disciplinary team.

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We're also retiring the branch name Alberta Wellnet

In addition to the Alberta Netcare name change, the branch name Alberta Wellnet has also been retired. Alberta Wellnet was the name of the branch within Alberta Health and Wellness responsible for developing and delivering the Alberta EHR.

Wellnet is also the name often associated with the Alberta EHR product itself and the deployment team. The branch is now called Information Systems Delivery, which better reflects its role within the department. The Alberta EHR product and the deployment team will adopt the brand Alberta Netcare.

The projects that were underway in Alberta Wellnet will still be managed by Information Systems Delivery. Those projects that relate directly to Alberta Netcare will incorporate the Netcare brand for consistency and for clarity.

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 Capital Health

Electronic Health Record Usage tops 7,600 in Capital Health

Capital Health is leading the development of the next generation of the Alberta EHR working with a Provincial Clinical Working Group to design Alberta Netcare Portal 2006.

By the end of November, the team expects to complete the system test and by the end of January complete the acceptance test.

Capital Health will continue to use its regional electronic health record netCARE until next spring when Alberta Health & Wellness begins to roll out Alberta Netcare Portal 2006. Capital Health will also be involved in a pilot of the new Portal involving 100 to 120 people at four sites in March and April. Site training for the pilot begins in February.

Capital Health continues to sign up new users and since netCARE's initial rollout in April 2005, Capital Health has signed up 7,661 users. Since the pilot in February 2004 through the end of September 2005, active users had accessed more than 1,100,000 patient files and viewed a total of 2,877,000 screens of information.

The largest user group of netCARE is RNs (33%) followed by physicians and residents (30%) and allied professionals (11%). The most accessed screens of information include lab results, transcribed reports and patient files. Ten per cent of users access netCARE remotely.

The netCARE project team is also working to bring Alberta Cancer Board lab results from Edmonton's Cross Cancer Institute into netCARE by early 2006. Other enhancements due to be released in netCARE early in the new year include PACS, ECGs, e-Signature, the provincial person directory, and lab reports from Aspen and East Central health regions.

News From Calgary Health Region

Health Information Exchange will enable sharing between systems

To enable information sharing across the province, the Calgary Health Region, in partnership with Alberta Health & Wellness, is developing a provincial Health Information Exchange. The Exchange will serve as a central point to exchange information between the various systems that make up the Electronic Health Record (EHR) in Alberta.

"The Health Information Exchange will work in the background, moving and integrating data to allow health-care providers to view a more complete picture of their patient by securely transporting information between various systems and making it available through the Electronic Health Record," explains Maria Eisenberg, Project Director for the Health Information Exchange project at the Calgary Health Region.

"Sometimes we use the analogy of a central nervous system to explain what the Health Information Exchange is. It acts like the spinal cord – receiving information from various areas and transmitting it where it needs to go."

LONGER TERM PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Alberta Netcare – Portal 2006
(coming spring 2006)

While no significant changes are planned for the Alberta Netcare Portal immediately, work is currently underway to develop an enhanced province-wide EHR to migrate the existing province-wide EHR product to the technology currently being used in Capital Health's netCARE.

The new product will be called Alberta Netcare Portal 2006. It is expected to be complete by Spring 2006 and released in a small pilot with health care providers. By early summer, the pilot is expected to be complete and the new product will be available to all health care providers.

The Alberta Netcare Portal 2006 product will still provide the same patient information providers have come to rely on and will set the stage for adding even more data such as diagnostic images in 2007. For health providers in the Capital Health Region, it will mean they will see enhanced functionality and province-wide information using just one tool, not the two tools they use today (Alberta EHR and Capital netCARE).

The Benefits of Electronic Health Information Exchange

The Alberta Netcare Electronic Health Record is a secure, web-based portal that can be accessed from anywhere in the province, giving health professionals direct access to key patient information such as laboratory test results, prescriptions and allergies.

Today, thousands of health professionals already rely on EHR to get more patient information more quickly. As Alberta Netcare expands across the province, both the number of users and the volume and quality of information in the system will grow, making it an even more valuable tool.

The Health Information Exchange will link registries together with clinical information like diagnostic images and lab test results to securely identify individuals and match records. "The security of the information that will flow through the Health Information Exchange is our number one priority," adds Eisenberg. "We are using world-class tools and best practices to protect confidentiality, ensure data integrity and maximize service availability to care providers."

The first phase of the Health Information Exchange will be released in 2006.

"The Health Information Exchange project is an integral part of the overall Electronic Health Record initiative in Alberta," says Kent Smith, Program Director for the Provincial EHR at the Calgary Health Region. "What we're building will eventually allow health information to be shared across all areas of health care in the province. We have a long road ahead of us to get where we want to go, but it's a necessary journey for us to take to realize our vision of an integrated electronic health record for every Albertan."
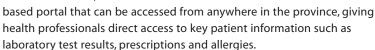
News from POSP

If you're a physician hearing about the various e-health initiatives underway through Alberta Netcare, and wondering where to begin, the Physician Office System Program (POSP) can help.

Since POSP began in October 2001, the percentage of Alberta's practising physicians using information technology in their clinics has gone from 5% to 52%, putting Alberta well ahead of other provinces. A total of 2,781 physicians are currently enrolled in the program and 2,300 of these are using electronic medical records in their clinics.

All physicians providing insured services in Alberta can apply for support at one of the three funding levels offered through POSP. Each level has a defined set of outcomes that physicians must agree to meet in order to receive funding. Physicians accepted into the program receive a combination of supports:

- **Financial assistance** to defray the cost of acquiring the necessary hardware, software and networks to achieve program outcomes and enhance the delivery of quality care. Financial assistance is provided on a "per physician" basis and under the current guidelines, all physicians selected into the program by March 31, 2006 are entitled to 48 months of funding.
- **Change Management Services** to help physicians implement and use their information systems. Services such as automation readiness assessments, assistance with project management and privacy impact assessments help physicians move from paper-based charts to electronic medical records.
- **Technical expertise** is offered through the development and promotion of requirements for physician office systems through POSP's innovative Vendor Conformance and Usability Requirements (VCUR).

In POSP's recent evaluation of the clinical and operational changes brought about through implementation of IT in physician offices, physicians reported that office automation has had a positive impact on clinical outcomes, office productivity, physician productivity, case management, provider communication, and clinical decision support.

To find out more, visit **www.albertadoctors.org/posp**, contact us at **posp@albertadoctors.org** or call **1.866.817.3875** or **780.452.1616**.