

Building on a Foundation to Sustain Quality Data



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Stakeholders in health care readily recognize that making good decisions requires good data. Throughout its mandate, the Health Results Team for Information Management (HRT-IM) has been committed to improving the accessibility of accurate,

timely and reliable health data—whether clinical, statistical or financial. The team has recognized that producing and sustaining better data is the foundation of an effective and efficient health system that best meets the needs of Ontarians.

We have also recognized that the creation, collection and maintenance of high quality data are collective responsibilities that must be shared by our health care partners and key stakeholders across the system. As the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) evolves to assume a stewardship role, it is clear that health care stakeholders will contribute to the improvement of the data that are central to the optimum performance of the health system.

In this update, I would like to highlight two projects undertaken by HRT-IM that lay a foundation for the continued evolution of a health system where decisions—from the front lines of service delivery to the executive boardrooms—will be made based on sound, reliable, accurate and accessible data and information.

Data Quality Management Framework (DQMF)

The province of Ontario continues to be committed to improving the timeliness, validity, reliability and usability of data across the health care sector. As part of the province's information management strategy, the HRT-IM launched a range of initiatives aimed at making better data available within the health care system. To ensure this momentum is continued going forward, the MOHLTC has developed a Data Quality Management Framework.

The central tenet of the framework is to foster the ability to improve the collection, reporting and management of and access to high quality data and information. This requires a long-term commitment and an underlying philosophy that everyone has a role to play in improving the quality of data—from service providers to information analysts. A culture of ongoing data quality improvement must be entrenched within the health care system.

The Data Quality Management Framework (DQMF) is a means to create a unified, standardized language of data quality that can be adopted by stakeholders across the health care sector. The framework not only defines the language of data quality, it creates tools to achieve and sustain high quality data.

The DQMF supports the continuous quality improvement of key clinical, financial and statistical health care data and information collected, reported and used by system and operational planners. The framework will promote an integrated systems approach to data quality improvement and provides the tools to support ongoing change.

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The DQMF recognizes and supports the importance of continued efforts by those ministry departments (e.g., Financial Information and Management Branch, Health Data Decision Support Unit) and organizations (Canadian Institute for Health Information) who collect, hold and provide access to data within or on behalf of the MOHLTC to continue to enhance existing internal quality assurance and provider education programs.

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The DQMF also provides definitions of data quality that will improve communication among organizations and sectors, and support a collective approach to data quality improvement. Following a wide review of organizations in the information management sector, the HRT-IM identified key determinants, elements and components of high quality data and engaged stakeholders in a process to focus and synthesize the components and definitions of high quality data.

The key determinants of data quality defined within the framework are: Timeliness, Validity, Reliability and Usability of data and information products. Criteria and strategies have been established to select indicators for each key determinant.

The DQMF also links performance measurement with a strategy to improve data quality. The data processes and products, which are selected for monitoring and reporting, are aligned with ministry strategies and support planning and decision-making needs.

Effective change does not occur overnight. Recognizing this, the DQMF takes an incremental approach in its data quality improvement strategy. The framework makes effective use of resources and focuses first on measuring and improving key determinants that will have the most significant impact on improving data.

The DQMF also provides operational tools to help realize its goals, including:

- **The Data Quality Scorecard**, which will allow the ministry, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and provider organizations with the ability to monitor performance in data collection and reporting, and progress in improving data quality over time.
- **The Data Issues and Actions Management System (DIAMS)**, which will provide data and information providers and users with a mechanism to identify data quality issues and information gaps and actions being taken to resolve and/or manage these issues. **DIAMS** will validate the reported issues and actions and the impact of these issues on data use and communicate the limitations of data to user groups. It will also monitor efforts to improve data and close gaps and provide access to these developments to information users.
- **The annual Provincial Data Quality Report** will assess progress in improving selected health care data within the key determinants of data quality. The report will also highlight improvement successes, identify outstanding and emerging issues and gaps, and provide information that can be used to develop strategies to improve data.

Overall, the Data Quality Management Framework supports an approach to foster the creation, collection, reporting, and continuous improvement of quality health care data in Ontario. It also signals an approach where producing and maintaining high quality data will be widely recognized as requiring both the collective commitment and responsibility of everyone involved in the health care system.

Extending Access to the Health Information and Resource Directory (HIRD)

The Health Information and Resource Directory (HIRD) is a web-based solution launched by HRT-IM to serve as a comprehensive and authoritative provincial “Yellow Pages” of health information. The directory, which includes 95 informational holdings and databases, 60 performance indicators, 50 surveys and 80 analytical experts, was made available to internal users within the MOHLTC during the summer.

In November, the online directory was introduced to provincial public health units, Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and LHINs. Demonstrations of the online directory were conducted with these initial users to test-drive HIRD during its pilot phase.

The scope of the information contained within HIRD has never before been available in one place. HIRD catalogues an array of information resources, data warehouses and other tools managed by the MOHLTC or agencies like the Ontario Hospital Association and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The directory was designed to be user-friendly and easily searchable where all information is linked to a common subject list and can be searched by subject, keyword, by section of the directory (e.g., people) or across the entire directory (e.g., profiles for all data experts and information holdings that reference acute care). Users are provided with a description of the information source, how it can be accessed as well as contact information.

HIRD will help to streamline the evidence and data research process critical to health analysts and planners. Its ultimate goal is to foster a collaborative approach to

the sharing of knowledge within the health care community by providing planners with a greater understanding of the scope of the available information, and by discouraging the duplication of existing information.

The ministry will seek feedback from pilot users to help strengthen HIRD going forward and will be asking a number of our partners across Ontario to share information that may be of interest through HIRD. For example, Cancer Care Ontario tracks health data that may be of interest to health care stakeholders throughout the province.

Organizations interested in participating in the pilot can contact the HIRD team via email (hird@moh.gov.on.ca).

The vision is for HIRD not only to become a comprehensive and authoritative resource directory, but also for a broad range of health stakeholders to take ownership of it and be custodians of this powerful online reference tool. Organizations interested in participating in the pilot can contact the HIRD team via email (hird@moh.gov.on.ca).

The Data Quality Management Framework, along with the HIRD, is laying the groundwork allowing us to look to the future, and a health system driven by high quality data. These projects will help foster a climate of continuous evaluation and improvement to maintain a health care system on which Ontarians can depend.

For more information

Write to HRTIM@moh.gov.on.ca, or call 416-212-4263. Visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s web site, Information Management section (for Health Care Providers) at:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/providers/information/information_mn.html