

Public Health Connects

The newsletter of the Public Health e-Health Council

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New e-Health Council for Public Health



Dr. George Pasut



Dr. Sheela Basrur

Public Health now has its own e-Health Council to provide strategic direction on e-Health priorities specifically related to the public health system.

By focusing on the big picture,

the Council will advise on e-Health requirements and opportunities for public health. To foster alignment with other initiatives within Ontario's larger e-Health strategy, the Council will also act as liaison with the Ontario e-Health Council and other sector e-Health councils.

While technology in public health may have lagged behind some other areas of health care, the new e-Health Council aims to do more than simply close the gap. The Council recognises the horizons of technology are rapidly expanding. Advanced applications, such as the Integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS) replacing the old Reportable Diseases Information System (RDIS), will open new opportunities for developing faster emergency response systems, more effective tracking and controlling of infectious disease, and better ways to share information. But the Council is not just about technology. Members also consider issues such as e-literacy and communications, so that people can use the new tools and are comfortable with the changes they bring.

Expert members

Public Health's e-Health Council brings together a remarkable group of professionals and academics, with years of experience and expertise in the field of public

health and e-Health. The council's co-chairs are Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care; and Dr. George Pasut, Medical Officer of Health for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Other members represent key areas within public health: medicine, nursing, epidemiology, chronic disease prevention, health promotion and infectious disease control, as well as information technology.

How the e-Health Council works

The Public Health Information and Information Technology (PHIIT) Office, within the Public Health Division, provides administration and communications support. In addition, the council appoints advisory committees to help the council oversee projects in the area of public health e-Health. These advisory committees provide advice on the business requirements and the development of these projects.

Collaboration among all sectors

Information sharing, communications, collaborative decision making are all part of the prescription for transforming our Public Health system. To effect this transformation, however, e-Health tools need to be developed within a fully integrated health care system. The Public Health e-Health Council joins with four other councils, representing the hospital, physician, continuing care and laboratory sectors, under the umbrella of the Ontario e-Health Council to help set the province's e-Health agenda.

Presenting your Public Health e-Health Council

Co-chairs **Dr. Sheela Basrur**, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and **Dr. George Pasut**, Medical Officer of Health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, have assembled an impressive group of experts in the field of public health to serve as council members. They are:

- **Judy Chalmers**
Executive Director
Grey-Bruce Community
Care Access Centre
- **Michael Connolly**
Chief Executive Officer
Smart Systems for
Health Agency
(from December 2004 –
April 2005)
- **Glenn Holder**
Chief, E-Health Solutions
Smart Systems for
Health Agency
(April 2005 – Present)
- **Dr. Robert Issenman**
Professor of Pediatrics
McMaster University
- **Dr. Ian Johnson**
Associate Professor
Director of MHSc
program in Community
Health & Epidemiology
University of Toronto
- **Dr. Jack Lee**
Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health
Promotion Branch
Ministry of Health and
Long-Term Care
(from December 2004 –
April 2005)
- **Bill Mindell**
Consultant
- **Andy Papadopoulos**
Director
School of Occupational
and Public Health,
Ryerson University
- **Pat Piaskowski**
Infection Control
Coordinator Thunder Bay
Regional Health
Sciences Centre
- **Dr. Elizabeth Rael**
Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health
Promotion Branch
Ministry of Health and
Long-Term Care
(from June 2005)
- **Paulina Salamo**
Strategic Planning and
Implementation Branch
Ministry of Health and
Long-Term Care
(from June 2005)
- **Lorelle Taylor**
Chief Information Officer
Ministry of Health and
Long-Term Care
- **Ruta Valaitis**
Associate Professor,
Nursing
McMaster University
- **Dr. Barbara Yaffe**
Associate Medical
Officer of Health
Toronto Public Health

A Tribute to Dr. George Pasut

As you may know, Dr. George Pasut steps down as Medical Officer of Health for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, effective June 30, 2005.

In addition to the significant contributions he had made within his health unit, George has also worked in multiple ways to improve public health within Ontario as a whole – not the least as the first co-chair of the PheHC. I want to take this opportunity to personally acknowledge those contributions.

A man of far-ranging vision, he has tirelessly kept his eye on the “big picture” issues, even while grappling with the day-to-day challenges of his position as MOH. His strategic advice and leadership on provincial issues and initiatives, such as iPHIS and this Public Health e-Health Council, have already had a substantial impact on the renewal of Ontario’s public health.

It is my sincere hope that George’s future career path will continue to be within the public health system.

Introducing Public Health Connects

Sharing information and seeking input on e-Health initiatives is an important function of the Public Health e-Health Council. With this in mind, we introduce our inaugural issue of the e-Health Council’s newsletter, *Public Health Connects*.

This newsletter will keep you informed on the latest news and developments within the Public Health e-Health Council. We’ll also share with you stories of how fellow public health providers are putting e-Health into action to protect health and promote a healthy Ontario, and reinforce vital linkages within public health and the broader health sector.

New Portals Launched

The public health sector now has two new ways to get information faster and more easily. Launched this April, the new portals, **eHealthOntario.ca** and **PublicHealthOntario.ca** provide links to important health notices, as well as information on the latest developments in e-Health, public health issues, and advances in health care delivery.

The eHealthOntario.ca portal promotes information exchange throughout the province’s health care sector.

PublicHealthOntario.ca is geared more specifically to providers in the public health sector, including all 36 Public Health Units, the office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the ministry’s Public Health Division. It will also be an important resource to organizations supporting the provision of public health services across Ontario, such as hospitals and laboratories.

Over time, the portals will add new services and offer secure, two-way communication. Plans also include the introduction of collaborative tools such as webcasting and web conferencing, net meeting and white boarding to allow public health providers to work together more effectively online.

Check out PublicHealthOntario.ca

The PublicHealthOntario.ca portal opens up to staff within the Public Health Division and Public Health Units a wealth of essential information – all conveniently organized, so you can find what you need quickly.

Getting to the portal

Just type our web address **www.publichealthontario.ca** into your browser. Once there, why not bookmark it, for faster access to the site?

Take a look inside

On the left-hand side of every page is a list of links to various categories within the portal. Click on a category link to find information, tools and other resources pertinent to that section.

Getting around the site

The right-hand side will always have a listing of Important Health Notices, links to other websites and portals, such as eHealthOntario.ca and OntarioMD.ca.

If you need help with the site

Technical assistants are available to help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You'll also find a **Help** button in the top navigation bar that will send you to a page with tips for using the site.

Much more on the way

The PublicHealthOntario.ca portal will continue to grow and evolve. In the coming months, we'll be adding e-mail and directory services, along with a secure members' log-in. This will allow you to send and receive confidential messages and other restricted material, and take advantage of document publication services and collaboration tools. Through the portal, you will be able to set up e-communities, meet online, and maintain minutes and other documents related to your project or interest.

Programs

Information and resources on the ministry's Public Health programs and services directed towards disease prevention, health promotion and health protection.

Support Services

Documents and directives and resources related to public health management.

Research and Evaluation

Information of interest particularly to epidemiologists and researchers.

Learning and Development

Information on Ontario Public Health educational programs and initiatives, plus access to other learning and development resources.

Projects and Committees

News about Public Health projects.

Public Health Units

General and more specific information about each Public Health Unit.

Public Health Applications

Applications Public Health Units need for everyday functions, including links to PHB.ca.

External Reference Links

Links to sites with information useful for the public health sector.

Important Health Notices

Summaries of important health notices organized by date and by their seriousness.

PublicHealthOntario.ca Advisory Committee

Read more next issue on how the PublicHealthOntario.ca Advisory Committee assists the Public Health e-Health Council in deciding future developments for the portal.

Five Health Units Plug into Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is coming to public health units. By the end of May, health units in **Kingston, Middlesex London, Niagara, North Bay, and Thunder Bay** can all communicate through the Smart Systems for Health Agency's (SSHA's) infrastructure, with equipment supplied by NORTH Network. These units will be part of the same system currently operating in the following locations:

- the office of the Chief Medical Officer,
- Public Health Division offices at 5700 Yonge and 1075 Bay, and
- Public Health Laboratories at 81 Resources Road.

This system is also compatible with the existing telemedicine networks in Ontario, with the planned direction to merge these into a single integrated network.

Plans for connecting the remaining 31 Public Health Unit main offices through videoconferencing continue to be explored.

So What's a Portal Anyway?

Websites? Portals?

What's the difference?

A **website** (also spelled Web site or Website) is a collection of Web files or pages dedicated to a specific subject, business or person. The site begins with a home page that has a single Web address (URL). You can get to all other pages of the site from this home page. Companies, organizations, or individuals can all have websites. Examples of websites are government ministry sites, such as MOHLTC's at www.health.gov.on.ca.

A **portal** is a specialized site that is a "gateway" to a variety of websites and subjects. It can be a starting site for using the Internet, such as Yahoo.ca, AOL.ca or Sympatico.msn.ca that links users to news, e-mail, entertainment, sports, shopping, etc. Or it can be more specialized in scope, gathering together a broad array of links and resources for a specific audience or particular area of interest, such as the new eHealthOntario.ca and PublicHealthOntario.ca portals.

Usually portals have a members area with secure registration and offer e-mail, and subscriptions to newsletters, online communities and discussion boards.

Public Health Connects is published throughout the year for members of Ontario's public health and people within the broader health communities by the Public Health Division of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Read *Public Health Connects* online on PublicHealthOntario.ca at www.PublicHealthOntario.ca.

We welcome your story suggestions, tips on upcoming events, photo submissions and comments.

Please contact:

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