

Welcome to **What's New in e-Health**. This e-mail newsletter is designed to inform, educate, and update you on e-Health initiatives and activities in Ontario, and beyond. It's intended as a quick reference and should take you only a few minutes to read. Contact details for the newsletter are provided at the end of this edition.

e-HEALTH IN FOCUS

In this **e-Health in Focus** section of **What's New in e-Health**, we'll explore the territory covered by the term 'e-Health'. You'll find information on different aspects of e-Health, and the details of the e-Health strategy Ontario is pursuing.

Getting Connected

e-Health is fundamentally about using information and information technology to improve patient and client care through an electronically interconnected and interoperable health care system. A basic part of this overall effort is connectivity and secure e-mail for health care providers.

Ontario's Smart Systems for Health network is the private, secure communications network hosting province-wide e-Health applications such as the Information System for Integrated Services for Children (ISCIS). One of the key benefits of SSHA's network is that health care professionals and providers can safely share information about patients or clients. For instance, hospitals with multiple sites can operate effectively and in real-time as a single organization.

SSHA's network connectivity is independent from government and public networks, with access restricted to approved system users. For more information on SSHA's network services go to: <http://www.ssha.on.ca/power/network.html>.

PEOPLE AND PROGRESS

In this **People and Progress** section of **What's New in e-Health**, you'll find information on a particular e-Health initiative that has recently reached a milestone. By reading regularly about the progress of particular initiatives, and the people involved, you will find the concept of 'e-Health' coming to life.

A Strategic Integration and Architecture function has recently been added to the e-Health Office. The **Enterprise and Integration Architecture** group will work collaboratively with the project teams to align the various e-Health initiatives at an architectural level. For example, an e-Health project working to provide hospital emergency departments with access to patient prescription history will be encouraged to use the same technology framework (underlying principles, standards and related processes) as an e-Health project working to create an information system for Ontario's health laboratories. The business needs are different, but a common framework within which the systems are built allows for eventual integration and interoperability. An analogy is the distribution of electricity. Whatever feeds in to the grid (hydro, solar, wind, etc), the transmission of electricity throughout the province is only possible if the overall system has a common framework. In health care, achieving the vision of an Electronic Health Record depends on similar integration and interoperability of different systems.

Mike Monteith has been engaged as the Manager responsible for the Enterprise and

Integration Architecture group. Mike has considerable experience with architecture and the design of large complex systems. Until recently, he was the Chief Architect for the Smart Systems for Health Agency (SSHA). **Andrew King** has joined Mike's team as an architect. Like Mike, Andrew has a strong background in e-Health and architecture. Until recently, he was a senior solutions architect with SSHA, where he was part of Mike's team.

Charles Goddard has also joined the e-Health Office. He is responsible for coordinating the e-Health Alignment Review Board (e-HARB) (see 'What's New' below) and the Diagnostic Imaging/Picture Archiving Communications Systems (DI/PACS) strategy project. Charles is working with the team from IBM that is developing the DI/PACS strategy, and with the Strategy Advisory Committee providing oversight. Charles will be working closely with Mike and his team to ensure that the work of e-HARB, while business-focused, is strongly linked to the architectural principles and standards that have been developed.

All of this work on integration and interoperability has one goal: better care for patients who ultimately reap the benefits of timely access to services and comprehensive patient information in the hands of their health care providers.

WHAT'S NEW

*In this **What's New** section of **What's New in e-Health**, you'll find the key updates since the last edition of the newsletter. Each item will provide a contact name and number to make it easy to follow-up on a specific topic.*

Province-Wide e-Health Consultations Completed. Fifteen sessions were conducted across Ontario, bringing together local e-Health leaders and presenters from Canada Health Infoway, the Smart Systems for Health Agency, and the e-Health Office. The consultative sessions included discussions about Ontario's e-Health strategy, presentations on local e-Health initiatives, and the opportunity for local health professionals to find new ways of collaborating and integrating their e-Health activities. An inaugural face-to-face e-Health Leaders' Forum is planned for **March 9, 2005** in Toronto. This is the first of quarterly forums intended to provide a face-to-face opportunity for members of the health care community, who are taking leadership roles in regional e-Health activities, to meet, learn and share. For more information, contact **Pat Jeselon** at 416-314-1206, or e-mail pat.jeselon@moh.gov.on.ca

e-Health Alignment Review Board (e-HARB) Established. e-HARB represents a new and innovative way to promote alignment among various e-Health initiatives, and to ensure they are designed and built to be of optimal use both to the ministry (MOHLTC) and to stakeholders in the broader health sector. Under e-HARB, e-Health program initiatives such as continuing care community and home care access portal, or expansion of the pharmacy information system, will consider a common set of "Rules of Engagement" which ensure that the initiative is consistent with broader health sector needs, and with other initiatives. The Board is composed mainly of health industry experts from Ontario and elsewhere. The first meeting of the e-HARB is being planned for late March 2005. For more information, contact **Charles Goddard** at 416-586-6503 or e-mail charles.goddard@moh.gov.on.ca

What's New in e-Health is produced by the e-Health Office in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

To subscribe to the newsletter, please send an e-mail to: ehealthOffice@moh.gov.on.ca and put 'Subscribe' in the Subject Line. We welcome your comments, and ask that you send them to: ehealthOffice@moh.gov.on.ca

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