

*In this **e-Health in Focus** section of **What's New in e-Health**, we'll explore the ground 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.*

Building a More Integrated Health System Through e-Health

Fundamentally, e-Health is about using information and information technology to have patient information flow to where and when it is needed to promote better patient care, improved patient safety and more effective use of health care dollars.

The 'flow of patient information' and appropriate access is simple to say, but highly complex to bring about. Think of how many places an individual gives health information during a lifetime: the immunization clinic at a school, the family doctor's office, the pharmacy, the specialist's clinic, the hospital's emergency department, different laboratories for separate tests, long-term care facilities, medical facilities in another province or country for a traveller, and the list goes on.

At any one of these locations, health care providers gathering the data collect it for their own purposes. Medical information is collected and dealt with in isolation even, at times, when there are overlapping areas of responsibility. And more often than not, data is taken down on paper, rather than electronically. Currently systems for gathering and entering data differ from one health care provider to another. Chances are, each health provider's system hasn't changed in many years. Information is seen as 'owned' by the collector, and many health care providers are wary of unauthorized access and privacy concerns.

The health care industry has been slower than others (e.g. finance, tourism, transportation) to adopt information and communications technologies, to a great extent because of the complexity of the industry's information needs. While Ontario's health care system has been using high-end technology for things like medical imaging for years, information technology applications have not been used across the system. That's why it is critical and urgent to put modern information and information technology to use in a strategic comprehensive way across Ontario's health care system.

Ontario's e-Health strategy is about building an interconnected and interoperable health system through a provincially co-ordinated effort. The system is in the process of being built in many locations with the ability to share patient and health information, over time, in a secure, reliable environment, respecting the privacy of the individual.

Collaboration is at the heart of Ontario's e-Health strategy: broad stakeholder involvement will eventually solve interconnectivity issues relating to policies, legislation, technology, research on effective implementation, and so on. e-Health will bring fundamental change to the way health care is delivered in Ontario. It can be seen as a journey with many challenges and achievements along the way.

*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.*

Inaugural Ontario e-Health Leaders' Forum a Catalyst for More Action

On March 9, more than 90 e-Health leaders from across Ontario gathered in Toronto to share best practices and find opportunities for collaboration at our inaugural Ontario e-Health Leaders' Forum. Not an e-Health initiative in and of itself, the e-Health Leaders' Forum will be an important vehicle for advancing e-Health in Ontario.

Hosted by **Camille Orridge**, Executive Director, Toronto CCAC and **Shirley Sharkey**, CEO, St. Elizabeth Health care, such a large gathering of e-Health leaders was an important step forward for e-Health activity in Ontario. "I cannot say enough about the strong will of the Forum participants to move forward," said **Pat Jeselon**, Director, Liaison and Co-ordination, Broader Health Sector, e-Health Office, who organized the forum. "While we all have a lot of work to do, there truly is an understanding of the need for collaboration and integration among key e-Health stakeholders."

So who attended as 'leaders'? "For the most part the people who came to our inaugural e-Health Leaders' Forum are actively leading e-Health initiatives in their region or their organization," Pat Jeselon said, "but this is an inclusive group, not exclusive. The more people who can come together to share their ideas and energy and enthusiasm for e-Health, the better."

The idea for the forum came from the over 700 participants who attended one of the 14 regional (and one for provincial programs) e-Health consultation sessions on the new Ontario e-Health strategy during the fall 2004. In addition to providing feedback on the e-Health strategy the Ontario government is pursuing, participants were given the opportunity to present on local or regional e-Health projects they were leading. Many attendees were eager to continue to meet others of like mind, continue to learn from others, and share information on the exciting prospects of a provincial e-Health strategy. It was from these individuals that the 'leaders' were identified for the e-Health Leaders' Forum.

The first e-Health Leaders' Forum included a presentation on Ontario's new approach to governance from **Lorelle Taylor**, Chief Information Officer of the Ontario Government's Human Services I&IT Cluster. Other presentations included an overview of provincial e-Health initiatives, and an inventory of many of the local e-Health projects that are underway across the province. **Brian Shorter**, CIO of the Vancouver Island Health Authority, joined the Forum via teleconference for a presentation on lessons Ontario can learn from B.C.'s experience with e-Health and regionalization. In the afternoon, group discussions were held on topics chosen by participants. These included balancing operational needs with the need for collaboration, building viable business cases for e-Health, and regional and local ICT governance.

The next e-Health Leaders' Forum will be held in London, Ontario on Wednesday June 22, 2005. For more information, or to receive a copy of the summary notes from the first meeting, please contact Pat Jeselon at 416-314-1206 or at pat.jeselon@moh.gov.on.ca

*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.*

Appointment of New Interim Chief e-Health Strategist- On April 18, 2005, **Roger Girard** assumes the position of Interim Chief e-Health Strategist, reporting to Lorelle Taylor. **Scott Campbell** will continue to work with Lorelle Taylor as a Special e-Health Advisor. Over the

past few years, Roger has led the development of the Public Health Information and Information Technology (PHIIT) Strategy. **Ian Brunskill**, the former CIO for Cancer Care Ontario, assumes the Executive Lead role of PHIIT. For more information, please contact **Roger Girard** at roger.girard@moh.gov.on.ca

Public Health embarks on Requirements Analysis for an Immunization Information System for Ontario

- Public Health has begun a study that will contribute to improving the provincial electronic system for recording and monitoring immunizations and vaccines in Ontario. Specifically, the study is analyzing high-level business needs, evaluating potential solutions (including the *integrated Public Health Information System* - iPHIS), and developing an high level implementation approach for an enhanced Ontario Immunization Information System (IIS). In time, the new IIS will support three functional areas: Immunization Registry, Immunization Management, and Vaccine Ordering and Distribution (Supply Chain Management). The IIS study was initiated in late January 2005, and will be concluded by May 2005. For more information, please contact **Ian Brunskill** at 416 212 7825 or e-mail ian.brunskill@moh.gov.on.ca

First e-HARB Meeting Held - The first e-Health Alignment Review Board (e-HARB) meeting was held on March 22, 2005. **Scott Campbell**, Special e-Health Advisor, gave an overview of the Ontario e-Health strategy and background information about the creation of the e-HARB. **Glen Holder**, Chief, Business Solutions, described the Smart Systems for Health Agency and the role it plays in e-Health. These were followed by e-HARB-specific presentations which encouraged discussion about the scope and review process that the e-HARB reviews would follow. A second meeting has been scheduled for May 2005 when a Chair will be appointed and the Board will go through a program review process. For more information, or a list of e-HARB members, please contact **Charles Goddard** at 416-586-6503 or e-mail charles.goddard@moh.gov.on.ca

Ontario Laboratories Information System (OLIS) Focus Groups Planned - Under the auspices of the Laboratories e-Health Council and in association with Canada Health Infoway, stakeholders are being approached for information and input into the transition to OLIS. As part of this initiative, focus groups are being organized through the Laboratory Regional Coordinating Committees. These sessions are taking place during the Spring of 2005. For more information, please e-mail the OLIS office at olis@ssha.ca or contact **Lindsay Campbell**, OLIS Change Management Lead at 416-314-2483.

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

April 19, 2005