

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 is 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 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.

Delivering on Integration and Coordination

Imagine how much more challenging our lives would be today if we didn't have electronic banking. We would need to use regular mail or stand in line to deposit cheques, to withdraw cash, and to make some bill payments. We would have to go to our own branch for all transactions. And our money would be subjected to the increased risk of human error and slower processing that comes when we don't have electronic, computer-based systems in place.

Now, imagine a situation here in Ontario, where health care providers in some parts of the province are using electronic record systems that cannot link to systems in other parts of the province. Or where an acronym means one thing at a health centre in Northern Ontario, but something completely different at a laboratory in Ottawa. Or where some health providers don't trust that personal health information can be emailed securely to other health providers in Ontario.

It can be extremely frustrating.

It doesn't have to be that way. Which is why the Ontario government has approved a new approach to e-Health governance. Fundamentally, the Ontario e-Health Council has been charged with approving the strategic framework, policies, standards, and priorities that will ensure e-Health initiatives are integrated and coordinated across our province. The goal? A province-wide system where a person's records are accessible wherever and whenever they are needed. Ideally, health information will flow seamlessly and be shared efficiently, thanks to province-wide standards and systems that will ease communication. The result will be better patient and client care.

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.*

Better Health Care Through Integration

Hospital Emergency Departments cannot afford to lose valuable time trying to obtain information from a patient needing emergency care about what drugs, if any, are being taken. It's not uncommon for doctors and nurses in Emergency Departments to hear statements such as "I take a little blue pill" or "I do not remember the name".

In emergency situations, quick access to accurate information about the drugs that the patient has been prescribed means health care providers can provide more informed patient care by identifying and preventing potentially harmful drug reactions.

*"One of the provincial government's key e-Health initiatives is called the **Emergency Department Access to Drug History Project**," said **Susan Paetkau**, Director, Drug Programs Branch and Project Sponsor. "This system will allow authorized health care providers in Emergency Departments secure access to the prescription drug histories of patients who receive benefits through the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) and Trillium Drug Program."*

The Health Network System (HNS) records the prescription drug history of ODB recipients. Ontario is expanding the use of the HNS to enable secure sharing of this data with authorized health care providers in Emergency Departments.

This project is targeted for phased implementation in September 2005 and is expected to be fully implemented in most Ontario hospitals by May 2006. Future plans include expanding this initiative to other health care providers, right across Ontario.

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.*

Chair Appointed to Hospital e-Health Council - The Ontario Hospital Association has announced their new Chair for the Hospital e-Health Council. Effective June, 2005, **Pat Campbell**, CEO of Grey Bruce Health Services, assumes this role. For more information, please contact **Carol McFarlane** at cmcfarlane@oha.com

Ontario e-Health Council Welcomes Jonathan Guss from the Ontario Medical Association - The new CEO of the Ontario Medical Association - Jonathan Guss - will also join the Ontario e-Health Council, starting with its meeting in June. For more information, please contact Patrick Nelson at patrick_nelson@oma.org

Public Health portals go live - The Public Health Information and Information Technology (PHIIT) Office has launched two portals that promise to change the way public health and other health care providers exchange the important information they need to help Ontarians lead healthier lives. PublicHealthOntario.ca focuses on providing timely and relevant

information to those serving in MOHLTC's Public Health Division and Public Health Units across the province. The second portal, eHealthOntario.ca, is aligned with the broader e-Health strategy, and aimed at professionals in the broader health sector. For more information, contact **Philip Edwards** at 416 212-4463, or philip.edwards@moh.gov.on.ca

e-Health 2005 Conference Attracted over 1,700 Registrants - Over 1,700 people registered to attend this year's e-Health conference, which was held in Toronto. Presenters from across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom shared insights regarding front-line e-Health implementation and applications success. The Program Chair was Dr. Alex Jadad, head of the Centre for Global e-Health Innovation in Toronto. For more information, please contact **Pat Jeselon** at pat.jeselon@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.
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June 3, 2005