



Friday, February 10, 2017

News Release

e-Health in Alberta – Moving patients and their healthcare providers into the 21st century

Upcoming policy symposium will address importance of integrated health information towards improved patient and system outcomes.

EDMONTON - The impact of digital technology in today's world is hard to miss. Our Wi-Fi-enabled gadgets have changed the way we work, play, and, most importantly, communicate. But despite being proven to significantly improve health outcomes and satisfaction with care, healthcare systems have been slow to adopt the use of digital technologies to communicate with patients, and to improve information sharing within the system.

The need to improve care through digital communication and electronic information sharing will be brought to the forefront at a [public policy symposium](#) being hosted in Edmonton on February 14, by the [O'Brien Institute for Public Health](#) and the [Institute of Health Economics](#).

"There is compelling evidence that these well-proven technologies will benefit patients and their families, and we are hopeful this event will act as a catalyst for progress in this area," says Dr. Doreen Rabi, who recently authored a [policy white paper](#), on behalf of Alberta Health, on engaging providers in digital health uptake.

"To not innovate within the healthcare system in the face of compelling evidence is a failure to the citizens that support and use the system."

Access of patients to their care providers through email and other digital forms of communication, or open, accessible e-health records, which allow the sharing of information between care providers across medical disciplines and institutions, deserve our investment as a province, Rabi says.

However, some care providers and custodians of health information have been reluctant to adopt, citing concerns over information privacy, liability issues, and ambiguity over billing processes for this kind of work. With this in mind, patients, providers, and system administrators will come together at the one-day symposium to inform ongoing policy and implementation strategy development.

A patient-centred approach

Integrated health records allow secure health information exchange – improving health care delivery by ensuring patients get the right care, with the right providers, at the right time, according to Dr. William Ghali, Scientific Director of the O'Brien Institute at the University of Calgary.

"Creating a province-wide integrated health record will ensure that patients and their care teams will have all the necessary information needed to make the best decisions possible," he says.

The Alberta advantage

Alberta has an opportunity to lead the country in health information sharing, says John Sproule, senior policy director, Institute of Health Economics.

The province developed Canada's first provincial electronic health record, and has recently announced the creation of an online portal that will permit patients to see their health data. These systems are a step in the right direction, according to Sproule, who believes in a "share information wherever possible and restrict only when necessary" approach.

"If we are to provide better health care for Albertans, we need to make sure that the most comprehensive and up-to-date information is available to providers and patients," says Sproule. "Information sharing is greatly facilitated with an integrated electronic health record, but will involve some changes in traditional interactions and taking into account the aspirations and concerns of all partners involved."

The Health Information Exchange white paper is available for download [here](#).

e-Health Policy Symposium: Towards Person-Centred Integrated Health in Alberta

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

The Westin, Edmonton
10135 100 Street Northwest
Devonian Room
Edmonton, AB T5J 0N7

[More information](#)

Available for interviews prior to and during the event:

Dr. William Ghali, Scientific Director, O'Brien Institute for Public Health, Calgary
John Sproule, Senior Policy Director, Institute of Health Economics, Edmonton
Dr. Doreen Rabi, member of the O'Brien Institute and author of provincial e-health white paper

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