

eDrug Project (PharmaNet-eRx)

The eHealth Program and PharmaNet-eRx

– Building Provincial Electronic Health Records for BC Citizens

eHealth is aimed at bringing better, faster, safer health care to British Columbians across the province. eHealth will introduce the provincial Electronic Health Record (EHR) which will provide each patient with a secure and private lifetime record of his/her key health history and care within the health system. A patient's provincial **EHR** will include shareable medical records such as medication history, lab test results and diagnostic imaging reports. Physicians, pharmacists and other health professionals will have access to portions of the provincial EHR when and where it is needed and authorized for patient care.

eHealth is a 10 year initiative that is being developed in three phases.

The **eDrug Project** is one of a number of eHealth Phase 1 projects underway. As described in previous project reports, the eDrug Project will upgrade PharmaNet—the existing province-wide computer network linking community pharmacies and other health care sites to a central set of databases. The new PharmaNet system will be called *PharmaNet-eRx*.

In this issue...

Our [previous eDrug Project Progress Report](#) focused on the benefits of the eHealth Program, described the eHealth projects underway and provided an overview of ePrescribing and the changes to the claims component of PharmaNet.

This report discusses the specific planned changes to PharmaNet and how they will affect the way community pharmacies use PharmaNet.



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*Project news for health
professionals and health
information management teams
from the eHealth Program*



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Who is Involved in the eDrug Project?

The **College of Pharmacists of BC**, the **College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC**, the **College of Registered Nurses of BC**, the **BC Pharmacy Association**, and the **BC Medical Association** are the key stakeholders working with the Ministry of Health and the Pharmaceutical Services Division on the eDrug Project.

Each stakeholder actively participates in the eDrug Steering Committee and eDrug Clinical Working Group providing direction, insight and guidance on developing and implementing PharmaNet-eRx.

Pharmacists and the Provincial EHR

Pharmacists, of course, will be key contributors to the medication component of the provincial EHR, which will also contain medication information from other care settings.

For instance, community pharmacists may have access to hospital discharge medication summaries and clinical information from a patient's time as an in-patient. These details are being discussed and evaluated with Clinical Working Groups involving all key stakeholders.

Update on Legislative Changes

Changes to the *Pharmacist, Pharmacy Operations and Scheduling Act (PPODS)* and the *Pharmacy Operations and Scheduling Act (PODSA)* were necessary to enable ePrescribing and the new vision of medication management in BC. The legislative changes passed third reading in the House in May '07.

Working Towards Comprehensive Medication Profiles for British Columbians

PharmaNet medication profiles currently include all medications dispensed at BC community or hospital outpatient pharmacies.

B.C. was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to capture this information and make it available to pharmacists and other authorized health professionals province-wide.

The expanded PharmaNet-eRx medication profile will include clinically relevant information from a patient's hospital stays as well as relevant oncology medications dispensed by the BC Cancer Agency.

Making this comprehensive information available to health professionals will provide them with a stronger base for clinical decision-making, supporting better care and improved patient safety. Each health authority will provide this information to PharmaNet-eRx based on their integration priorities and plans.

The eDrug Project team is researching the possibility of including prescriber samples and over-the-counter medications and of extending the time period in which a drug remains on the patient profile. In the existing PharmaNet system, a drug is retained on the profile for 14 months. In PharmaNet-eRx, it may be retained as long as it is clinically relevant.



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Electronic SA Processing

PharmaCare Special Authority (SA) confers regular benefit status to a drug that would not otherwise be covered or be only partially covered. PharmaNet-eRx will automate and streamline processing for many routine SA requests from prescribers.

Automated Request Submission:

The existing PharmaCare SA process requires prescribers to fax completed forms to the Pharmaceutical Services Division at the Ministry of Health—or, for urgent requests, submit a request by phone. With PharmaNet-eRx, prescribers will be able to submit most SA requests to PharmaNet-eRx for automated adjudication and immediate decision.

Criteria and Cost Information:

PharmaCare's website has traditionally provided information on cost coverage and the clinical criteria for SA approval. In cooperation with the Pharmaceutical Services Division of the Ministry of Health, the eDrug Project will enhance the reliability, currency and presentation of this information.

SA Request Adjudication Status:

Authorized health professionals will be able to use PharmaNet-eRx to determine if an SA exists for a patient and when an SA expires. Eventually, patients will be able to check the status of their SA request via the Internet.

These improvements should help to shorten SA approval turnaround times, so patients can begin therapy sooner. Time that health professionals spend checking the status of SA requests should also be reduced.

More on ePrescribing

As described in our last report, ePrescribing is one of the most important PharmaNet-eRx enhancements. Two elements must be in place to enable ePrescribing:

- Electronic medical record and practice management computer systems for physician's offices need to replace today's largely paper-based health records to enable prescribers to add electronic prescriptions to PharmaNet-eRx. The more medical offices that adopt such a system, the more successful the ePrescribing initiative will be.
- The PharmaNet system (including PharmaNet-compliant software in pharmacies) must be upgraded to enable pharmacies to retrieve those electronic prescriptions directly from PharmaNet-eRx for processing and dispensing.

Once these two elements are in place, prescribers will be able to enter prescriptions into their office system which will send the prescription to PharmaNet-eRx electronically.

PharmaNet-eRx will check the prescription against the patient's medication profile and immediately send Drug Use Evaluation (DUE) information such as drug interactions back to the prescriber.

After the prescriber has reviewed the DUE results, he/she will confirm the prescription and it will be added to PharmaNet-eRx. The pharmacist will then be able to retrieve the electronic prescription from PharmaNet-eRx.



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Recording Prescription Pick-Up

Currently, there are no standard, formalized processes in B.C. for tracking prescription pick-up by patients. Changes are planned that will require pharmacists to track prescription pick-up in PharmaNet-eRx.

For health professionals making patient care decisions, knowing that a patient has collected his/her prescription from the pharmacy is a good indication that the patient is actually using the medication.

Today, pharmacy systems record that a prescription has been dispensed. PharmaNet-eRx will also require pharmacy staff to confirm that the prescription has been picked up by the patient.

Although this enhancement will add an extra step to processing a prescription on PharmaNet-eRx, medication profile accuracy and patient safety will both be improved. The eDrug project is working with its Clinical Working Group to determine the most efficient approach for recording prescription pickup.

Providing Patients with Online Access to their Medication History

Today, a patient who wants a printed copy of their PharmaNet medication profile, including a list of those who have accessed his/her PharmaNet record, must go to a community pharmacy and show appropriate identification. The pharmacy sends the request to the College of Pharmacists of BC, where the profile is printed and mailed directly to the patient. Patients need easier access to their own PharmaNet records.

Eventually, eHealth could introduce secure patient access via the Internet as an additional option for patients wanting to view their records. Not all patients will be comfortable using the Internet to look at their records and we know that many will continue to rely on their pharmacists. However, access to their own medication profile may help some patients to better manage their health care, meeting one of eHealth's goals, which is "*...giving citizens improved access to a broad range of health information, placing them in more informed positions to stay healthy or actively manage their own care.*"

Similarly, many patients may not feel the need to review a list of the health professionals who have accessed their information—but having the option to do so will likely increase patients' confidence that the health system is protecting their privacy.



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In Our Next Report...

Information on system messaging and clinical vocabulary standards for PharmaNet-eRx will be included in our next report.

Working with Software Organizations

We continue to work with the organizations that supply or support pharmacy software, EMR software and other point of service systems.

At our May 2007 workshop, we updated these organizations on PharmaNet-eRx and provided more detail regarding new messaging standards and conformance specifications. We also obtained their feedback on key pharmacy software enhancements.

Our Vision...

“To improve the delivery of patient care in British Columbia by expanding the use of electronic medication information management to facilitate seamless care across all care settings.”

Our Plan...

“To upgrade and enhance the existing, well respected PharmaNet system and integrate its services with all eHealth EHR components.”

Let's stay connected!

Please send your questions, comments or ideas for this newsletter to the eDrug Project team at: edrug@gov.bc.ca