
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

BC UPGRADES PHARMANET TO ADVANCE ELECTRONIC HEALTH CARE

VICTORIA – B.C. is enhancing PharmaNet as the next step in implementing electronic health records by investing \$14.2 million in its eDrug project, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

“Upgrading PharmaNet will help us further improve patient safety and better protect patients from medication errors that occur in a paper-based system,” said Abbott. “With the new PharmaNet, physicians and pharmacists will be able to track patient medications between acute care and community settings and provide greater accuracy in the PharmaNet medication profiles.”

PharmaNet is internationally recognized as a world-class secure electronic network that protects patient safety. It protects patients from potentially dangerous medication errors, duplications and dangerous combinations of different medications. It records all prescriptions dispensed at B.C. community pharmacies in a central database and checks for interactions.

eDrug is one of seven eHealth projects underway in British Columbia that will use advanced information technology to deliver needed health information instantly to authorized health professionals in B.C. The eDrug project, in addition to delivering the new PharmaNet-eRx system, will:

- Provide online tools so physicians and pharmacists can offer affordable, best-practice therapies;
- Provide greater accuracy in the PharmaNet medication profiles by recording both dispensing by the pharmacists, and pickup of the prescription by the patient;
- Reduce administrative time in submitting PharmaCare Special Authority requests;
- Strengthen the privacy and security features of PharmaNet; and
- Over time, enable physicians to prescribe online.

“Pharmacists welcome upgrades to PharmaNet that will improve patient care,” said Marshall Moleschi, registrar of the College of Pharmacists of BC. “Updating PharmaNet has the potential to improve patient safety by reducing adverse drug events, avoiding treatment delays and callbacks, leading to more effective and efficient care delivery.”

Funding for B.C.’s eDrug program comes from the Province and Canada Health Infoway, a federally funded, not-for-profit organization that is leading the development and adoption of electronic health records across Canada. Infoway is contributing \$8.8 million and the Province is contributing \$5.4 million of the \$14.2 million agreement.

“PharmaNet has been one of Canada’s leading e-health initiatives for more than a decade,” said Richard Alvarez, president and CEO of Canada Health Infoway. “By connecting physicians and pharmacists, the new PharmaNet-eRx system will help reduce medication-related adverse events, increase patient safety and result in better health outcomes for patients throughout British Columbia.”

Currently, MAXIMUS BC and Systems Xcellence Inc. (SXC) maintain PharmaNet for the Ministry of Health's Pharmaceutical Services Division. The enhancements to PharmaNet are in a change order to the existing master services agreement for an additional \$14.2 million. The change order will see MAXIMUS BC configure and install a new SXC application as well as integration of this product with other eHealth components.

"This is a major improvement to the already world-class PharmaNet system," said MAXIMUS BC president Duff Lang. "Improving information access for pharmacists and the public will truly deliver on the eHealth vision and will enable us to continue our quality service on behalf of the province."

All patient information will be protected by privacy measures that are among the strongest in Canada. The personal health information in PharmaNet and other components of a new electronic health record will comply with applicable privacy protective legislation, including the Province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Personal Information Privacy Act, the Pharmacists, Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act and provisions of the Health Act that govern the use of information for health-related purposes. In addition, access to patient information will be restricted to only those having legal authority and a clear need to access the information.

Canada Health Infoway is leading the development and implementation of electronic health projects across Canada. Infoway works with provinces and territories to invest in electronic health projects, which support safer, more efficient health-care delivery. Fully respecting patient confidentiality, these private and secure systems provide health-care professionals with immediate access to complete and accurate patient information, enabling better decisions about diagnosis and treatment. The result is a sustainable health-care system offering improved quality, accessibility, productivity and cost savings.

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