

December 9, 2009

**DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION OF MANITOBA'S  
SECURE HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM NOW UNDERWAY: OSWALD**

The province's electronic health record (EHR) project continues to move forward with the design and implementation of a system that will offer authorized health-care providers immediate access to selected patient information, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

"Most of us have a health record on paper, but electronic health records will allow health-care providers reliable access to current and relevant medical and individual patient records, making it easier to deliver timely and effective health-care services," said Oswald. "Since 2007, Manitoba eHealth has been working to computerize medical records in hospitals and specific program areas, like diagnostics and laboratory testing. Now, we are moving forward on our commitment to implement a record that will pull all this information together in a secure health record."

Manitoba's EHR project will establish a lifetime record of a person's key health history. This will tie together a person's health data, such as medication history, laboratory results, diagnostic images and hospital records.

A group of companies led by IBM has been awarded the contract, after a public competition which involved physicians, nurses and other health professionals.

"All provinces are working on their own EHR plans and we are pleased that Manitoba continues to move forward on this project," said Roger Girard, chief information officer of Manitoba eHealth. "We are also developing an approach to consult with clinicians and the public on the important details and to determine what information is required for a better understanding of the end product."

Girard also noted the project is expected to create dozens of jobs in Manitoba's information technology sector.

The province has signed a \$22.5-million contract with the IBM-led group to immediately begin the design and implementation of a Manitoba-specific electronic health record.

Manitoba's health record will safely connect key pieces of an individual's personal health information, permitting sharing of information by authorized health-care professionals, the minister said. For example, electronic health records will allow physicians of a patient in Brandon to have immediate electronic access to tests performed in Winnipeg, and vice versa.

The records can improve continuity of care for patients who see more than one health-care provider, reduce the chances of medication errors and help providers avoid duplication of treatment and unnecessary medical testing.

The funding for the development of the electronic health records is provided by both the province and Canada Health Infoway. Canada Health Infoway will work with Manitoba eHealth to ensure the design and implementation of the electronic health record meets both Manitoba and Canadian objectives, said Oswald.

“I commend the government for its leadership in moving forward with its efforts to make electronic health records a reality for Manitobans,” said Richard Alvarez, president and CEO of Canada Health Infoway. “The end result will be a health-care system that instantly delivers the information health providers need in order to make informed care decisions. This will lead to increased patient safety, cost savings and efficiencies.”

Canada Health Infoway is an independent, not-for-profit organization funded by the federal government that invests with public sector partners across Canada to implement and reuse compatible health information systems that support a safer, more efficient health-care system.

The EHR project will deliver components of the electronic health record over the next three years. The province has committed \$150 million towards the implementation of a broader eHealth strategy.

Work on several components of Manitoba’s EHR project started in 2007. This includes lab, diagnostic and hospital record systems, such as the Hospital Information System Project (HISP) launched at St. Boniface General Hospital in February 2009. Work to link all these systems together into a system-wide EHR is underway and implementation is expected to begin in 2010.