

## NEWS

### PATIENTS BENEFIT FROM IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH E-HEALTH READINESS PROJECT

May 28, 2009

When it comes to ensuring the best processes possible are in place behind-the-scenes to enable physicians and other health care professionals to focus their time on providing the best and safest care possible, the South East Local Health Integration Network is making significant headway.

Today the LHIN is celebrating three significant eHealth milestones, bringing our entire region closer to an electronic health record and improving the quality and safety of health care for our residents. In February, representatives from Brockville General Hospital (BGH) and, an area community health centre and family health teams from the surrounding communities of Brockville, Portland, Athens and Gananoque undertook a Lean-based Kaizen project to improve their workflow processes, enabling them to work smarter, together. The other two projects being recognized today involve electronic health record sharing between physicians and acute care hospitals in the Kingston and Prince Edward County areas.

At the time the Brockville-based project began, it was estimated BGH produced and sent out 920 reports (about 4,000 pages) per day. Many of these electronic reports are printed from one system and then scanned into another electronic record (at family physician office). For family physicians, there is no access to an electronic medical record for patients that extend beyond their own offices. At the same time, a significant amount of time is spent in transcription at the hospital and physical patient records are still created and filed for every patient accessing BGH.

The South East LHIN's eHealth office received funding to work with stakeholders to tackle the problem of too much time spent printing, copying, sorting mailing, faxing and filing paper copies of reports. Each time a piece of paper is handled creates an opportunity for error. Paper-based systems mean information may not necessarily be available when clinicians need it.

Working together, the partners identified, discussed and analyzed four potential solutions. Today, primary care providers are able to access diagnostic imaging, lab, pulmonary function tests, pathology and dictation reports in PDF format electronically using software solutions supplied by BGH. With relationships established and recognition that tough challenges can be overcome, the South East LHIN plans to roll out further Lean and Kaizen projects across the region. For BGH and the primary health teams in the area, further steps are in the works to reduce the volume of paperwork involved with emergency department and outpatient reports and more.

#### QUOTES

"Technology, itself is not a panacea," says Paul Huras, Chief Executive Officer of the South East LHIN. "Simply applying 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology on top of 20<sup>th</sup> Century workflow does not make sense – that is why it is so important we look at our processes and really think about what we are doing, and why we are doing it. That is what health system transformation is all about."

"Having current information at the clinicians' fingertips will improve both the quality and safety of the care we provide and greatly benefits our patients," says Ray Marshall, President and Chief Executive Officer of Brockville General Hospital. "Our goal is a seamless electronic health record with information from both the hospital and primary care providers' offices. This advancement represents a milestone in the implementation of our new Hospital Information System."

“Appropriately named *No Paper Please*, the project was an invigorating and positive experience. It was an excellent opportunity for primary care and the BGH to work together to produce positive changes with regard to flow of patient information,” says Judy Fielding, Manager, CPHC Brockville & Gananoque Community Family Health Team. “Once fully implemented, it will enable an improved flow of BGH patient reports to primary care offices. There will be no time lag in providers’ accessing patient results immediately once tests are completed, thereby improving timeliness of clinical response. A substantial cost and environmental savings will also be realized.”

“The LHIN is pleased to partner with hospitals and local Family Health Teams to put in place processes to help streamline technology that securely shares patient information,” says Paul McAuley, Chief Information Officer for the South East LHIN. “This project is a great example of how proper processes and technology can improve patient care by delivering the right information to the physician at the right time. Through the efforts of eHealth Ontario and our local health care providers, we will continue to improve the sharing of information both amongst providers and with citizens and their families.”

## QUICK FACTS

- At the outset of the project, each Family Health Team and Community Health Team receives 100-150 reports daily for scanning – 60-70 per cent of those were coming from BGH.
- Officially called the “Hospital to Family Health Team Lean Analysis”, the project received one-time funding under the province’s physician eHealth demonstration initiative. Proposals under this initiative were expected to:
  - Build awareness, demonstrate value and promote physician participation and collaboration among health care providers
  - Advance the provincial eHealth strategy and advance physician use of technology
  - Provide immediate value to community physicians along with the necessary change management support to assist physicians
  - Provide lessons learned from the initiatives to inform the implementation and change management planning for upcoming eHealth solutions.
- The South East LHIN works closely with eHealth Ontario, a provincial agency created to harness information and technology to improve patient care in Ontario. The key priorities of eHealth Ontario include creating a diabetes registry that will ensure people with diabetes in the province are receiving the best care possible; establishing an e-prescribing system to eliminate hand-written prescriptions and reduce medication errors; and developing an e-health portal which will allow healthcare providers and patients to easily and securely access the health information they need to deliver and receive better care.

## LEARN MORE

For more information about the South East LHIN, visit [www.southeastlhin.on.ca](http://www.southeastlhin.on.ca)

For more information about eHealth Ontario, visit [www.ehealthontario.on.ca](http://www.ehealthontario.on.ca)

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