

NEWS

PRINCE EDWARD FAMILY HEALTH TEAM, QUINTE HEALTH CARE INTEGRATE WITH ELECTRONIC PATIENT RECORD

May 28, 2009

An innovative project between the South East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), eHealth Ontario, Quinte Health Care (QHC) and the Prince Edward Family Health Team (PEFHT) is resulting in more sustainable and higher quality, safer care for patients while also reducing workload for healthcare providers and drastically reducing the amount of paper used.

The hospital to family health team integration initiative is one of three significant eHealth milestones being celebrated in the South East today, as the entire region edges closer to an electronic health record. A similar project is also underway between the acute care hospitals in Kingston and physicians with the Maple Family Health Team. The third project involves a Lean-based Kaizen project to improve workflow processes between family health teams in the Brockville area and their acute care hospital.

The South East LHIN's eHealth office received one-time funding to work with stakeholders on the aggressive project to integrate systems between QHC and PEFHT. By building on similar interface projects in other areas, the initiative was completed and launched on April 22. Today, the 22 physicians and three nurse practitioners at the PEFHT are able to provide better care for their patients given they can access patients' most current health information. Since the project began, the number of paper reports being sent to the family health team has been cut in half.

The South East LHIN solution is based on xwaveEMR, an Internet-based application service provider solution that enables easy integration with other health-care systems and ensures compliance with secure eHealth Ontario communication channels and international data standards like HL7. The result is near real-time delivery of hospital information to the family health team — everything from discharge summaries and surgical reports to specialist notes and diagnostic imaging results. xwave's interface engine sorts all of it and sends it to the appropriate physician's EMR desktop, and patient chart. Information remains consistent —there are no new workflows for physicians to learn, and they don't have to remember to open an application or check an in-box — the information is pushed right onto their desktop.

QUOTES

"Technology, itself is not a panacea," says Paul Huras, Chief Executive Officer of the South East LHIN. "Simply applying 21st Century technology on top of 20th 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."

"We were pleased to have the opportunity to work with the PEFHT on this initiative that will benefit safe, quality patient care for the community," said Bruce Laughton, QHC President & CEO. "By ensuring Family Health Team care providers have easy and instantaneous access to all the information they need about a patient's hospital stay, surgery, lab and diagnostic imaging results, providers can make the best decisions about the patient's ongoing care and save time for everyone involved."

“It used to take a week or more to get a document into our electronic medical record, said Dr. Greg Higgins of the Prince Edward Family Health Team, “Now it is virtually instantaneous. I would estimate the amount of paper coming in to our offices since implementing this interface has decreased by about 60 percent. This represents about 90,000 pieces of paper per year for our team. This interface not only saves money on paper and toner and benefits the environment, but it eliminates the infrastructure required to produce, sort, deliver, scan, re-sort and shred all this paper. Implementation of technical projects can be challenging, but this was relatively easy thanks to the unanimous, enthusiastic adoption by providers and their staff who immediately recognized the numerous benefits of the interface.”

“The LHIN is pleased to partner with hospitals and local Family Health Teams to put in place 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 technology can improve patient care by delivering the right information to the physician at the right time. Pilot initiatives permit us to use the technology in a controlled and secure manner to prove the impact it can have in care while ensuring that information is properly secured. 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.”

“Our partnership with the South East LHIN builds on both a proven EMR and 30 years of systems integration experience that allows us to go beyond installing the family health team's EMR to connecting it to the many hospital systems in the LHIN,” said Chan Ghosh, Director, Operations with xwave Healthcare. “Automating the flow of clinical data between hospital and FHT is a tremendous enabler in terms of removing paper silos and making information available in minutes rather than days. This kind of integration is setting new benchmarks for access and care, and there will be more projects like it to come.”

QUICK FACTS

- Officially called the “Hospital to Family Health Team Integration Initiative”, 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 health-care 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

For more information about eHealth Ontario, visit www.ehealthontario.on.ca

Media contacts:

Julie White, Communications, SE LHIN, 613-242-1389, or email Julie.White@lhins.on.ca.