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Seven health regions reach milestone with electronic health records

Red Deer... The vision of every Albertan having an electronic health record took a leap forward with the installation of a new regional information system that covers over 90 per cent of Alberta.

Seven non-metro health regions can now exchange up-to-date patient information through the Regional Shared Health Information Program (RSHIP). This health information system links the Aspen, Chinook, David Thompson, East Central, Northern Lights, Palliser and Peace Country health regions. Instead of each health region using different health information systems, RSHIP provides a single system that will add the health information of 1.2 million Albertans to the provincial system.

“The installation of RSHIP is a crucial building block assisting in the development of Alberta Netcare, our provincial electronic health record,” said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness, “Regions should be commended for their hard work which will result in better health care for Albertans.”

The RSHIP program went into development two years ago when a number of health regions needed to replace their clinical and financial information systems. They agreed to collaborate and modernize their information system capabilities together, using common software and sharing a single data centre in Red Deer. Benefits to patients include test results that are available more quickly and physicians who have up-to-date, accurate information, even if their patient is not a local resident. For example, if a resident of Fort McMurray were to need emergency health care while in Lethbridge, that person's allergy and test results would be available electronically to local health care professionals.

“The significance of RSHIP to the provincial electronic health record cannot be understated. As an integral part of Alberta Netcare, RSHIP will assist health care practitioners in making better and more appropriate clinical decisions,” said Tom Seaman, RSHIP Board Chair, “Having more information at the point of care simply improves care and patient safety.”

The cost of the RSHIP initiative is \$138 million, with the provincial government contributing \$65 million and the health regions adding \$73 million.

Alberta Netcare Electronic Health Record is a clinical health information network that links community physicians, pharmacists, hospitals, home care and other authorized health care professionals across the province. It helps authorized health care providers make timely decisions regarding patient care. Alberta Netcare only includes key information that health care professionals need to make appropriate treatment decisions. Today that information includes allergies, prescriptions and lab test results. Additional information such as diagnostic images will be added over time.

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