The Need

- Primary health care (PHC) clinicians need more information about patients in their practice—especially about quality and coordination of care and outcomes for groups of patients with multiple chronic conditions.
- Health system planners lack data to meaningfully measure and improve the quality and efficiency of the PHC system.
- Electronic medical records (EMRs) are being implemented across Canada to support improvements in PHC information; however, the data collected in many current EMRs is not generally standardized or comparable, and it has limited ability to support improvements in PHC quality, access or outcomes.

Methods

- Working with PHC clinicians and their organizations, CIHI initiated the PHC VRS, a national voluntary PHC EMR reporting project.
- Clinicians participating in the PHC VRS submitted their de-identified EMR data to CIHI to help inform the work of another priority CIHI-led project to develop a common and agreed-upon PHC EMR content standard for priority PHC data elements.
- CIHI analyzed PHC VRS data, mapped it to the PHC EMR content standard and produced patient-centric provider feedback reports for participating sites to support quality improvement in seven dimensions, including health utilization and outcomes.
- Working with clinicians, jurisdictions, researchers and Canada Health Infoway, and informed by the PHC VRS, CIHI developed a pan-Canadian PHC EMR content standard for priority PHC data elements that, once implemented, will support consistent data capture at the point of care in PHC EMR vendor applications.
- Working with Canada Health Infoway and others, CIHI promoted the adoption and implementation of the PHC EMR content standard among the jurisdictions to support pan-Canadian implementation, enhanced EMR data portability and EMR interoperability with priority external systems—resulting in critical information that can inform health policy and decision-making at various levels.

Objectives

- To demonstrate how clinicians participating in the PHC Voluntary Reporting System (PHC VRS), a project of the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), have informed the clinical relevance of the pan-Canadian PHC EMR content standard.
- To understand how adopting and implementing this standard results in the capture of meaningful standardized EMR data during regular workflow to improve the use of data for patient care.
- To understand how standardized EMR data can be used by health system planners to meaningfully measure and monitor the quality and efficiency of the PHC system.
- To understand how adopting and implementing the PHC EMR content standard in PHC EMRs across the country will provide health system planners with comparable and meaningful information with which they can better understand and manage PHC.

Results

- PHC clinicians who are participating in the PHC VRS contributed to the clinical validation of the pan-Canadian PHC EMR content standard.
- Participating clinicians used quality improvement feedback tools and reports to help them increase the use of their EMR data and understand their patient populations—especially the quality of care and outcomes for groups of patients with multiple conditions and patients at risk.
- The PHC VRS has demonstrated that the pan-Canadian PHC EMR content standard can ensure that the necessary information is available to be collected and used in the EMR for primary and health system use.
- Adopting and implementing the PHC EMR content standard in PHC EMRs across the country will provide health system planners with comparable and meaningful information with which they can better understand and manage PHC.

The Benefits

Primary Use

Data is currently and commonly required to support the delivery and/or administration of primary health care.

Health System Use

Data is commonly required to support PHC clinical program management, health system management, research and monitoring of the health of the population.

Conclusion

As jurisdictions adopt the standard and vendors upgrade their EMR products to implement the pan-Canadian PHC EMR content standard, the full benefits of more and better PHC EMR data will be realized.

Who We Are

Established in 1994, CIHI is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that provides essential information on Canada’s health system and the health of Canadians. Funded by federal, provincial and territorial governments, we are guided by a Board of Directors made up of health leaders across the country.

Our Vision

To help improve Canada’s health system and the well-being of Canadians by being a leading source of unbiased, credible and comparable information that will enable health leaders to make better-informed decisions.

About Primary Health Care

PHC is the most common health care experienced by Canadians and improvements are essential. Our goal is to establish new pan-Canadian data sources and information that can be used to better understand PHC across Canada, report on PHC indicators and inform health policy and decision-making at various levels.