

Integration. Transformation.

May 1, 2013 – Better sharing of information, knowledge and resources is at the heart of an integrated health care system – and is the core of the North West LHIN's Physician Office Integration Program, or POI.

POI allows for the almost immediate transmission of patient information from hospital information systems to Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) located in physicians' offices. That information includes lab results, X-rays, medication history, discharge summaries, many different types of medical assessment and, most recently, pathology reports.

POI was launched in Northwestern Ontario by eHealth Ontario in 2009.

"A very big part of our mandate is to help equip clinicians with the tools they need to provide seamless, timely care to their patients," said Dwight Yorke, a Senior Analyst with the Physician eHealth Program at eHealth Ontario. "The Physician Office Integration Program does exactly that."

In the days before POI, patient information gathered in hospitals was sent to physicians in paper form, often taking between seven to 14 days. It's estimated that this information is now being sent in real time to 48 hours. In practical terms, what that means is that a patient leaving hospital might proceed directly to his or her doctor's office, only to find that the physician is already in possession of important test results or health summaries.

"More timely information means better care and a better system. It's as simple as that," said Andrew Wehrstedt, Director of the Project Management Office and Change Management at the North West LHIN. "Doctors are able to make quick decisions based on timely information and patients no longer have to wait prolonged days if not weeks for important results. On top of that, there is less waste and duplication because everybody has the information they need, when they need it."

One sure sign of the benefit to physicians is the fact that they themselves are now funding the program. Approximately 330 clinicians in 31 different practices across Northwestern Ontario are enrolled in POI. Twelve of the region's 13 hospitals are taking part, with the thirteenth, Lake of the Woods District Hospital, set to come on board next year. An estimated 150,000 patients are benefiting from the program, and the 32,000 electronic transmissions per month mean a huge amount of paper is no longer sent via mail or courier on one end, and sorted and filed on the other.

"This is the system working as it should," said North West LHIN CEO Laura Kokocinski. "Our LHIN is committed to promoting and supporting more integration throughout our health system, and the POI program is one of the great success stories of the past few years."

Physicians interested in joining the POI program must have an EMR system purchased from an OntarioMD certified vendor. For more information, email nwpmo@lhins.on.ca.

Physician Office Integration Program *...by the numbers*

2009

when eHealth Ontario launched POI in Northwestern Ontario

up to 14 days

time it *used* to take to share patient information in paper format

real time to 48 hours

time it *now* takes to share the same information electronically

32,000

number of electronic transmissions per month

150,000

Number of patients who benefit