

Canada Health Infoway – A pan-Canadian Approach

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Abstract:

Canada Health Infoway is a non-profit corporation created and funded by the federal government of Canada in 2000. Its initial focus is to accelerate the implementation of an electronic health record (EHR) on a pan-Canadian basis as well as produce an EHR blueprint by 2007. The organization is a major investment for Canadians with a \$1.1 billion budget, but substantial long-term healthcare savings are expected due to Canada Health Infoway's involvement.

Description:

This poster will explain the mission and operations of Canada Health Infoway (CHI) with particular emphasis on its two primary mandates, namely to be a knowledge leader for EHR initiatives in Canada and to develop the EHR blueprint based in part on deliverables that emanate from the projects Infoway funds. The challenges associated with its ambitious and far-reaching mandate will also be illustrated. Currently, clinical information system initiatives in Canada are developed in isolated pockets with little or no collaboration. The result is an inability to effectively share patient records, duplication of efforts, and reinforcement of a culture that discourages sharing. Infoway's role in all its funding initiatives is to foster project partnerships and sharing of knowledge.

Despite the enormous financial investment from Canadian tax payers to Canada Health Infoway, there is evidence that the reduction in duplicated efforts will actually reduce the overall price tag of a pan-Canadian EHR. In fact, it has been shown that without Infoway's participation, Canada will spend an additional \$1.6 billion implementing EHRs¹. The reduced duplication will come from two Infoway objectives. First, Infoway will connect organizations across the country that are working on similar projects and encourage them to share knowledge and lessons learned. As well, all projects funded by Infoway are required to produce 'knowledge objects' that can be reused by other organizations.

The challenges facing Infoway are sizeable but not insurmountable. Among other issues,

Infoway is challenged to foster cooperation and collaboration where there has been none previously. Showcasing successful partnerships will help mitigate this, as well as the financial incentives that Infoway is able to offer. Infoway is also mandated to lead the change management processes that must occur for a pan-Canadian EHR to be accepted by clinicians and public alike. Additionally, Infoway must ensure that all projects it undertakes meet interoperability standards with other projects. Without this vital piece, Infoway would merely be propagating the status quo.

While running the day to day business of project identification, initiation, investment and 'pull through', Infoway must always keep its mandate at the forefront to ensure continued federal support and to meet the expectations of the clinical field and the general public.

¹Canada Health Infoway Inc. Presentation on Business Plan 2002 June Available from: URL: <http://www.infoway-inforoute.ca/pdf/CHI-Presentation-BussPlan.pdf>