

Online Tool Will Support Ontarians With Chronic Kidney Disease In Management Of Their Own Care

TORONTO, January, 2008: An online tool for Ontarians living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) will provide patients with the ability to self-manage their disease and improve interactions with their healthcare teams, resulting in better quality care.

The Chronic Kidney Disease Patient Portal is a web-based personal health application that can integrate with a patient's electronic health record, in turn supporting the patient in management of his/her own health care.

"This exciting initiative further allows patients to be directly involved with managing their health care," said George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long Term Care. "This system will help patients improve their health as well as help improve the productivity of the health system."

"This innovative approach will support timely intervention and facilitate better communications among the care team members," said Richard Alvarez, President and CEO of Canada Health Infoway.

"By giving patients information at their fingertips, they will be less likely to make unnecessary calls to specialists for information, test results and prescription advice - this helps to relieve pressure on specialists," he added.

Infoway will invest approximately \$2 million in the portal, which is expected to be operational by March 2008. Patients will be able to access the portal through a link found on both the Grand River Hospital and University Health Network websites, authenticating their identity through a secure login process. The portal will provide patients with access to valuable and credible educational content to support decision-making about their disease.

The system will make it possible for patients to self-monitor symptoms and side effects of their disease which will help them to improve management of their chronic condition and to reduce unplanned visits to doctors or emergency rooms. In addition, the portal will serve to facilitate communication between patients and providers by providing timely access to medication summaries and lab results, accompanied by information to help patients understand what the results mean.

Patient self-management, in combination with early intervention of specialists and multi-disciplinary healthcare teams, can delay the progression of kidney disease for patients in the pre-dialysis phase. The slowed progression can result in improved quality of life for patients, reduced wait lists for dialysis and a lower cost impact on the healthcare system. The average annual cost of treatment for patients in pre-dialysis is \$2,000, as compared to \$50,000 for those in dialysis.

"I am a firm believer in patient education," said Dr. Judith Miller, Deputy Chief, Division of Nephrology, University Health Network. "An educated and aware patient tends to be involved and invested in his/her care. This patient portal will promote knowledge and awareness of disease processes and treatments, and should translate into better adherence to care plans. This in turn may result in decreased morbidity and may delay progression to end-stage renal disease requiring renal replacement therapy."

As many as 1,500 patients served by the Local Health Information Networks (LHINs) of Waterloo/Wellington and Toronto Central will benefit from the new portal. All providers of the Hamilton/Niagara/Haldimand/Brant LHIN, including Hamilton Health Sciences Center, intend to join the patient portal initiative in the future.

"The Tri-LHIN Patient Portal project will support our Integrated Health Services Plans by allowing provider organizations in these three LHINs to become more focused on the needs of patients/clients and their families," said Bruce Lauckner, eHealth Lead for the Waterloo Wellington LHIN.

"The investment being made by Infoway will advance the services provided to residents of our LHINs suffering from chronic renal disease."

With the support of the Shared Information Management Services (SIMS) Partnership, a shared information management and technology service that supports the healthcare information needs of University Health Network and eight other healthcare organizations in the Greater Toronto Area, the chronic kidney disease patient portal will leverage Grand River Hospital's cancer care portal, My Care Source(R). The portal also leverages a clinical care tool for symptom management developed by Cancer Care Ontario.

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