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2015 at a glance

At TELUS Health, we are passionate about enabling sustainable healthcare delivery in Canada. We think of ourselves as a partner to Canada’s health system and our thought leadership content is intended to share insights and ideas that provoke new ways of thinking, spark discussion, and inspire action.

Our content serves as a platform to showcase the wealth of innovation that exists across the country and also leverages the strong subject-matter expertise we possess at TELUS Health. Over the course of 2015, TELUS Talks Health delivered several thought leadership articles offering insights on a range of topics that matter to Canadian healthcare.

Provincial Spotlights

Healthcare transformation: spotlight on Quebec

In this article, Hélène Chartier, Senior Director, Strategy, Marketing & Communications looks at Quebec healthcare in the midst of sweeping and dramatic change. In it she notes how Quebecers are highly receptive to embracing digital healthcare and conditions are aligned to start seeing real change in the province.

Alberta’s tipping point: a new era of digital health connectivity?

Alberta’s foundation of health IT is ahead of the curve and positions the province to lead a new era of digital health delivery. In this article, Dave Watling, Vice-President and General Manager, Enterprise Solutions poses the question: “will Alberta leverage its investments to move past the tipping point?”

Connecting to community: BC’s profound healthcare shift

While the term “patient-centred care” may sound like rhetoric, in British Columbia, it is a movement that is building momentum and bringing more care into the community. In this article, TELUS Health’s Kathryn Seeley, Director, Health Enterprise Business Development and Shannon Malovec, Principal, Transformation Services interview BC thought leaders from the Ministry of Health, Vancouver Island Health Authority, University of British Columbia, as well as a patient-partner. Together they discuss how the patient-provider-system relationship is evolving to one of greater partnership and collaboration and is achieving a positive shift in how healthcare is delivered.

Future-Forward

Personalization paradigm: what molecularly tailored medicine means

The topic of personalized medicine is attracting a lot of attention in the scientific community and represents a new paradigm of diagnosing and treating disease, which comes with many as-yet unresolved concerns. This article, by Brendan Byrne Chief Innovation Officer, is a primer on the promise of personalized medicine.

Three mobile trends healthcare providers need to know

The healthcare sector is not exempt from the disruptive impact of mobile and is moving in this direction. In this piece, Vincent Ng, Health Business Consulting Senior Manager discusses how mobile devices offer the potential to shift from reactive to proactive care delivery.

Achieving Hospital IT Excellence

Managed IT services a boon to Canadian hospitals

Will Canadian hospitals accept a private sector organization to manage their applications for a clinical solution, as have their US counterparts? As hospitals across the country face the need to replace their legacy hospital information systems, Dave Watling, Vice-President and General Manager, Enterprise Solutions looks at how partnering with private sector organizations can result in world-class, affordable and sustainable solutions.
Three strategies to make change happen in clinical environments

Healthcare is a tough sector in which to implement technology and manage change. Getting change right with clinicians is often where health IT projects fall down. In this article, John Ronson, Strategy Practice Leader and Justin Kim, Senior Consultant with TELUS Health Transformation Services present three core strategies for successful change and looks at how both McGill University Health Centre and Virginia Commonwealth University Health System got change right.

Examining Tough Issues

Why ePrescribing in Canada needs a kick-start

In Canada, conditions are ripe for ePrescribing. The technology exists. Practitioners and patients want it. And no regulatory barriers stand in the way. Yet prescribing medication in Canada remains a risk-prone, manual process. This stands in sharp contrast to the US where ePrescribing is the norm for more than 73% of physicians and 95% of pharmacies. In this article Vincent Ng, Health Business Consulting Senior Manager offers an informed perspective on ePrescribing and encourages the health system to have the courage to think differently.

Breaking through silos in the private health benefit ecosystem

In this industry discussion paper, TELUS Health’s Luc Vilandré and private health plan strategist, Suzanne Lepage explore the intersection between cost management and health outcomes.

The paper draws on insights from leaders throughout the complex private health benefit ecosystem – private payors, brokers and consultants, as well as industry associations, pharmacists, family physicians and specialists.

Three questions we should be asking about workplace wellness

Do workplace wellness programs need a makeover? TELUS Health’s Chief Wellness Officer, Dr. Elaine Chin and Martha Switzer, Co-Founder of SPROUT assert that today’s programs need to progress beyond the tactical and employ innovative ways to catch and intervene with the warning signs of Canada’s three big killers: heart attack, stroke, and cancer.
Connecting to community:
BC’s profound healthcare shift

The idea of connected healthcare is gaining traction in Canada. In July 2015, the federal government issued its report Unleashing Innovation: Excellent Healthcare for Canada, noting the need for “fundamental changes in how healthcare is organized, financed, and delivered.” In this article, authors zero-in on the delivery of care, in particular the impact that extending care beyond hospital walls and out into the community can have for patients and the health system.

It focuses further on British Columbia’s vigorous and ongoing efforts to bring care into the community. The province has dedicated several thoughtful policy papers to the subject and is a strong advocate for bridging primary and community care.

Insight from BC thought leaders

The authors, both of whom are BC-based, have dedicated their careers to working with healthcare organizations to bring about transformative change through technology. In developing this article, they interviewed BC-based thought leaders representing diverse aspects of BC’s healthcare landscape.

- **Tracee Schmidt**, Executive Director of the Special Project Branch of the BC Ministry of Health underscores how the province’s framework for patient centred care hardwires the patient value proposition into new system design.
- Vancouver Island Health Authority’s (“Island Health”) **Dr. Mary-Lyn Fyfe**, Chief Medical Information Officer and **Catherine Claiter-Larsen**, VP Quality Systems and Chief Information Officer share their passion for telehomecare.
- University of British Columbia’s (UBC) **Dr. Kendall Ho**, Director eHealth Strategy Office and Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine notes the importance of balancing the convenience of technology with the trusted patient/provider relationship.
- **Lois Dalrymple** shares the patient perspective and the importance of having a seat at the table.

Their views, while distinct, point to a common theme: a profound shift has occurred. Having patients at the decision-making table is increasingly the norm, not the exception. Moreover, each notes an inspiring change in the patient-provider-system relationship toward one of greater partnership and collaboration.

**BC’s healthcare landscape**

BC’s healthcare landscape faces increasing and unsustainable costs, alongside patients’ growing expectations for digital care provision and inclusion in the design of health programs.

In the province, health spending is anticipated to outstrip other expenditures by 2017. Hospital spending accounts for approximately 30 percent, or $1,800 per capita on top of delivering over 30 million healthcare services each year to BC’s 4.5 million residents. Almost 50 percent of all health system expenditures stem from delivering care to those living with complex chronic conditions and disability — care that could be delivered at less system cost in home and community settings rather than in hospital settings. At the same time, patients are demanding more participation in their own care and engagement with the design of healthcare programs — a trend that is notable in BC as it is across the country.
Patient expectations are further amplified by the high prevalence of digital technology in people’s daily lives. “Patients can’t understand why a GP would question taking a picture of their rash and sending it to a dermatologist. They don’t see a barrier and their expectation is that technology will be seamless and readily available,” says Island Health’s Dr. Mary-Lyn Fyfe.

By extension, those living with chronic conditions embrace the idea of digital care closer to home: 79 percent of Canadians indicate they are comfortable with virtual monitoring for chronic conditions.

**Embracing patient-centred care**

Conditions are ripe in BC for embracing patient-centred care. And, in its policy discussion paper, BC’s Ministry of Health puts forward a set of principles to drive decision-making related to restructuring and shaping primary care. The first is patient-centred care, “…recognizing the need for healthcare to consider the whole person and not simply the presenting health issue…”

“There are so many things you can focus on in healthcare. Putting forward a framework for patient-centred care as a North Star for all of us to focus on is really brave and bold,” says Tracee Schmidt, BC Ministry of Health’s Executive Director of Strategic Projects. “What we are being challenged to do is understand the patient perspective in the initiatives we are working on. We need to be able to articulate that value proposition in everything we are doing.”

While the term “patient-centred care” may sound like rhetoric, in BC there is no question that it is a philosophy and a movement that is ramping up and here to stay.

For example, the Ministry of Health operates the Patients as Partners program that supports the efforts of health care providers, universities, health care not-for-profits and non-governmental organizations to work together to include the patient voice, choice and representation in health care improvement. The program matches healthcare partners and patient partners to work collaboratively on healthcare redesign.

“It’s really good to be involved in some of the changes, to play a part in improving healthcare in different areas and at different levels,” says Lois Dalrymple, an Okanagan-based citizen who actively volunteers on several healthcare committees.
Technology, meet community, meet strategy

BC has made progress using technology to bring care into the community and help patients manage their health closer to home.

“When I reflect back a little over ten years ago, people used to ask me ‘what is telehealth anyway?’ and ‘informatics’ wasn’t even a word. Today, we have groups of physicians and clinicians who are telling stories about how telehomecare has changed how they can deliver care,” says Island Health’s Dr. Mary-Lyn Fyfe. Indeed telehomecare, home health monitoring and other consumer technologies like wearables and health apps are ushering in a new era in healthcare delivery that is better for patients, better for healthcare budgets and is scalable.

“Patients want improved access, they want personalized information,” says Dr. Kendall Ho of UBC’s Department of Medicine. “Speaking as an Emergency doctor, we are a key interface between acute care and community care. This is where technology can play a strong role. First, how can we leverage technology so that we can follow up with patients after they are discharged from the ER, without having to wait a full week until their follow-up with a primary care doctor? And second, how do we empower patients to monitor themselves so they can head-off a follow-up visit to ER? This is an important calibration between acute care and community care where technology can carry the ball.”

From the perspective of delivering care throughout BC’s numerous remote communities, the need for telehealth and home monitoring is tangible. As Island Health’s Catherine Claiter-Larsen observes, “citizens in remote areas have complete clarity on their need of telehealth. People do not want to travel, incur costs, and even lose income by missing work. They reach out to us to express their frustration, sharing personal stories of travelling eight hours one way for a 15- or 30-minute appointment that doesn’t even involve a physical examination. Our community members are scrutinizing these encounters and asking us to provide technology-enabled alternatives like teleconsultation.”

Case in Point: Impact of Home Health Monitoring on Clients with Heart Failure

A new Home Health Monitoring (HHM) service was implemented in two health authorities – Island Health and Interior Health – in British Columbia. The HHM service included nursing care enhanced with technology in the home to deliver a heart failure monitoring protocol. Analysis was conducted on 192 clients who participated in the HHM service. Results demonstrated increased self-care capacity and improved health for clients. Health system utilization decreased by 76% resulting in cost savings associated with inpatient, emergency and physician services.

To read the full report, click here. (Available in English only).

Looking forward from her standpoint of managing large-scale provincial IT implementations, Tracee Schmidt advises that tying technology to the strategic agenda is pivotal. “I think technology has a very large role to play when it is aligned with the direction that the healthcare system is trying to go. On the other hand, when great IT is operating at cross purposes or in isolation of the strategic agenda, we collectively miss out on really important opportunities to make sustainable change.”

And, from a clinical perspective, Dr. Kendall Ho also notes that technology alone is not an answer. “We have opportunity with technology, but I hope we never forget the high touch piece – the trusted partnership between patients and professionals. It’s important that technology strengthens this trusted relationship. We can achieve high touch and high tech for our patients.”
Patient voices inspiring change

As BC increases momentum in delivering patient-centred care, patients are being actively sought out and engaged in the process. Today, more than 30,000 patients are directly engaged in activities with Patients as Partners organizations. And Island Health’s Board hears regularly from patient groups.

“It’s really getting back to a focus on the patient first,” says Lois Dalrymple who, based on personal experience, wanted to take steps to see how the patient experience in hospital settings could be improved. “They really listen to every patient. But, it’s important to remember that change takes time.”

“When I talk to individuals and hear their stories about how the system has inadvertently failed them or caused them hardships, it motivates designing things differently and finding innovative things we can do on a system basis,” says Tracee Schmidt.

Engaging patient advisors is the new normal. “Patients are changing the conversation at the decision-making table,” says Catherine Claiter-Larsen. “It’s inspiring to see the consistency of commitment across healthcare leaders to get to the heart of what matters to the people we serve and support them in achieving their goals for health and care.”

Real change; not rhetoric

In speaking with these BC thought leaders, it is clear that patients, providers, health authorities and government are equally committed to making this profound shift in healthcare delivery a reality.

“We’re part of a broader movement. These changes are not local to Island Health or BC. We see people coming together and meeting in a purpose-driven way – where historical hierarchies and roles are not as relevant; where vision and commitment to change is what matters,” says Catherine Claiter-Larsen.

“The general public is absolutely ready and engaged. This is really a fantastic time for stakeholders to work together,” concludes Dr. Kendall Ho.

Acknowledgement

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5. PwC Keynote, Making Care Mobile: Shifting Perspectives on the Virtualization of Health Care, September 2013.
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