

INFOWAY UPDATE

Canada Outpaces US in Health IT

Canada Health Infoway will have pumped \$562 million into health information technology projects as of next month, said Richard Alvarez, chief executive officer of Canada Health Infoway while addressing the annual Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society conference.

Alvarez said the amount includes \$151 million for EHR systems and \$130 million in federal investments in the development of diagnostic imaging systems. Provincial, regional or local healthcare organizations have matched the federal investments.

The investment in health IT will have a big payback, Alvarez said. He estimates it will shave \$6 billion a year from Canada's national healthcare bill.

Canada's total federal investment in healthcare IT since the turn of the century for its population of 31 million people dwarfs that of the United States, which has a population of 295 million, since the Office of the Coordinator of National Health IT (ONCHIT) was formed two years ago.

ONCHIT's budget for fiscal 2006 is \$111 million, while President Bush has asked for \$169 million for health IT in the fiscal 2007 budget. Canada Health Infoway still has more than \$500 million to spend to jump-start health IT projects, with a goal of providing EHRs to half of the Canadian population by 2009, Alvarez said.

— Government Health IT

Completed Thames Valley Hospitals' Imaging Network Bringing Benefits to Patient Care

A project to establish a shared diagnostic imaging network in Southwestern Ontario marked its completion today with the connection of Woodstock General Hospital (WGH) to the Thames Valley Digital Imaging Network. The initiative, one of the largest projects of its kind in Canada, allows eight hospitals to share diagnostic images electronically.

The project, which has served as a model for other health information network projects across Canada, was initiated by the Thames Valley Hospital Planning Partnership (TVHPP) and jointly funded by Canada Health Infoway and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The network allows sharing of diagnostic images between rural hospitals and the resources of tertiary-care hospitals, leading to more accurate diagnoses and improved access to appropriate care for patients. Planning is underway to expand the network to other southwestern Ontario hospitals. For more details see page 110.

PEI Government Announces Partnership with Hospital Foundations and Canada Health Infoway to Develop Electronic Health Record for Islanders

PEI Department of Health has signed a contract with Cerner Corporation to develop and implement a Clinical Information System, paving the way for the development of an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system on PEI. The EHR will allow health-care providers in PEI hospitals and family health centres to have electronic access to a patient's complete medical record including information such as medical test results and medication history.

Islanders will see many benefits from this new electronic information system. It will improve patient safety, help to decrease wait times and assist with the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals who will be eager to work with this efficient, state-of-the-art system.

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Nightingale Signs EMR Contract with Alabama Neurological Institute

Alabama Neurological Institute has selected the Nightingale electronic medical record (EMR) solution, services and support to work in conjunction with its existing HealthNet transcription services. The contract includes a six-doctor licence and will provide the Institute with improved workflow by capturing patient information and easily populating it into the Nightingale EMR application.

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Top e-Health Trends

Manhattan Research published their top trends for eHealth marketers to consider in 2006. The trends are based on research conducted in the U.S. and Europe over the past 10 years. They are:

- Search engines will be essential for physicians and consumers: Consumers are 30% more likely to begin their online health session with a search engine than by going to a known website.
- The broadband revolution: For the first time, the number of consumers with broadband exceeds those with a dial-up connection.
- "Alternative" media is no longer alternative: The number of consumers relying on podcasts, video, and blogs will experience double-digit growth this year.
- Prescription product sites will be viable destinations: Product sites, such as those for Lipitor, Allegra, and Nexium, are each generating annual traffic of at least 2 million visitors – more hits than their call centres get phone calls.
- Europe is untapped: With new offerings, European physicians will begin to use the same professional resources that U.S. physicians use.

Source: Manhattan Research.