

A Proposed Evaluation Framework for EHR Initiatives

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- **WHAT IS AN EHR?**

An EHR is an Electronic Health Record, which provides individuals with a secure and lifetime record of their key health history and care within a health care system. The record is available electronically to authorized health care providers and the individual anywhere, anytime, in support of high quality care.

- **WHY DID WE DO THIS STUDY?**

Across Canada, EHR initiatives are proceeding, with little or no uniformity in their design, implementation or evaluation. This technology is expensive and impacts many facets of health care (health care delivery, planning and administration). A common approach to evaluation will help facilitate knowledge transfer about best practices and help us measure the impacts of the technology.

- **HOW DID WE DO THIS STUDY?**

This study involved a number of strategies. We surveyed every provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada to learn about their EHR initiatives. We systematically reviewed the published and grey literature around evaluation of complex health information systems to identify methodological issues and best practices to date. We then drafted a preliminary evaluation framework and circulated it to key stakeholders for comment and revision.

- **WHAT WAS PRODUCED FROM THIS STUDY?**

Three deliverables were produced from the study: (1) an annotated bibliography of the literature reviewed; (2) an inventory of EHR initiatives across Canada; and (3) the evaluation framework.

- **WHAT IS THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK?**

The evaluation framework is a template for the design and conduct of evaluation studies to assess EHR initiatives in Canada. It consists of 7 steps that lead researchers and key stakeholders through the design and implementation of an evaluation study and the dissemination of findings to key stakeholders. It provides a menu of the core questions which can be rigorously addressed in an evaluation of this type of initiative and identifies potential research designs, core indicators and potential data sources which can be used to address these questions.

- **HOW WILL THIS WORK BE USED IN THE FUTURE?**

This framework is currently being used to guide the evaluation of the UPI/Client Registry project in Newfoundland and Labrador, and will be used in a study of the impact of information systems technology in primary care sites in this province and Saskatchewan in the new year. Interest in the framework has been expressed from across Canada and internationally. We hope that the framework resonates with key stakeholders involved in EHR initiatives and that it proves to be a practical and useful guide to evaluation efforts in this field.

- **HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?**

If you are interested in learning more about this project, you can contact Dr. Doreen Neville (709-777-6215; dneville@mun.ca). If you would like a copy of the framework and the companion documents which were produced, they can be downloaded from the following site: www.nlchi.nl.ca/research_evaluations.asp