2010 National Physician Survey:
Family Physician Usage of Electronic Medical Records

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Data Collection

- The National Physician Survey (NPS) — conducted every three years
  - Joint study by CFPC, CMA and Royal College has been supported by CIHI
- Largest Canadian physician workforce survey
- Sent to every physician, medical student and resident in Canada
  - 90,079 recipients in 2010
- Response rate in 2010: 18%
  - 12,076 physicians
  - 2,546 residents
  - 3,139 medical students
- NPS data is weighted on several demographic variables to reliably represent the total population of Canadian physicians.
Electronic Medical Records Summary

• Health technology systems enhance physicians’ perceptions of their preparation for managing patients, increase their ability to document and follow up on adverse events, and improve the implementation of clinical practice guidelines¹.

• Previous studies indicated that, due to concerns over cost, security, privacy, workload and design, slow electronic medical record (EMR) uptake in Canada has placed it behind other countries in the adoption of this new technology²,³.

• However, recent studies show that physicians in Canada are gaining confidence in the use of EMRs for improving the quality of patient care and practice management⁴.

• This study looked at strategies implemented for the introduction of EMRs in various Canadian provinces, and the use of electronic medical records by FP/GPs, according to the NPS 2010 data.
Electronic Medical Records Summary

• Proportion of FP/GPs in Canada using electronic medical records to enter and retrieve patient information has been rising steadily.

• Exclusive reliance on paper charts decreased from 63% in 2007, to just 41% in 2010.

• In 2010 82% of Family Medicine residents expected to be using electronic medical records upon entering practice.
Despite the overall upward trend in adoption of EMRs, there are significant differences in use of EMRs between the provinces.

Provincial regulations and funding support for adopting EMRs into practice have been introduced.

The provinces were separated into several groups to highlight the existing policies and programs and the level of EMR implementation in each province.
• Alberta’s Physician Office System Program (POSP) has been in effect since 2001, offering physicians a 70% refund on costs associated with electronic medical records introduction. The program has been in effect throughout the past 11 years.

• Alberta has been a consistent leader in implementation and use of both EMRs and other medicine information technology tools, such as scheduling systems, laboratory and pharmacy interfaces etc.

• In Alberta, number of FP/GPs using EMRs exclusively has consistently been the highest in Canada.
As part of eHealth Ontario’s strategy of introducing electronic tools into healthcare, the OntarioMD program has been in effect since 2008, offering significant subsidies for physicians who wish to either adopt or upgrade EMRs being used in their practice. It also offers a free EMR transition support system.

British Columbia introduced the Physician Information Technology Office (PITO) in 2006. Up to 70% of physician costs for EMR implementation are covered.

The use of EMRs in both Ontario and British Columbia has increased from 2004 to 2007 to 2010, as compared to the national average.
Atlantic Provinces

- Nova Scotia’s Secure Health Access Record (SHARE) has been in development since 2006. It was implemented in 2010 as one of several electronic tools being gradually introduced. EMR usage has been climbing steadily.

- The PEI health record strategy was initiated in 2007 and launched in 2010. Practices using EMRs exclusively are almost non-existent - mixed models are more prevalent in PEI.

- New Brunswick’s interoperable electronic health record system (iEHR) was initiated in 2007 and was still being implemented in 2010.

- Newfoundland is also in the process of developing of a standardized electronic medical record, with some other electronic tools already having been launched.
Saskatchewan and Manitoba

- Manitoba and Saskatchewan did not have a formal EMR strategy implemented as of 2010 data collection time.

- eChart Manitoba and eHealth Saskatchewan were launched in Dec 2010, and Jan 2011 respectively, to provide financial reimbursements to the physicians who plan to implement electronic medical records in their practice.
Quebec

• FP/GP usage of EMRs in Quebec was below 10% in both 2004 and 2007.

• Although EMR use increased to 21% in 2010, Quebec remains the province with the lowest rates of EMR usage, and the highest in exclusive use of paper records to store patient information.

• The QHR (Quebec Health Records) is currently being implemented with the goal of being fully operational by 2015.
• National EMR usage by FP/GPs has been increasing steadily. Number of practices depending on paper records only is decreasing.

• Provinces that have implemented comprehensive strategies (Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia) are showing a higher than national average use of electronic medical records and a lower dependence on paper.

• A variety of existing programs are being implemented in Atlantic Canada and Prairies.

• Data from the future iterations of National Physician Survey will be useful in measuring the EMR adoption across the provinces.
Thank You!

www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca

Would you like to use the NPS data in your research? We can help!

Contact us at info@nationalphysiciansurvey.ca
References

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