Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) CeRx Integration Project

PIP implementation is currently in its latest phase which includes integrating PIP with all health care provider computer systems. Integration will make it easier and more efficient for health care providers to access patient information available in PIP. Pharmacy systems are the first of the series of health care provider computer systems to be integrated.

What is PIP CeRx Integration?

PIP CeRx integration allows for all of the information currently displayed in a PIP profile to appear directly on that patient’s profile in the pharmacy Practice Management Software (PMS). The PMS will send and receive messages directly to and from PIP using CeRx messaging. CeRx is a pan-Canadian Electronic Messaging Standard that transmits information to and from PIP resulting in the messaging back of information about drug interactions, duplicate therapy and other potential prescription issues to the user. As a result, CeRx messaging eliminates the need to open the PIP application separate from the PMS for patient’s prescription history in Saskatchewan.

To ensure quality and continuity, all Pharmacy Software Vendors (PSV), including Kroll, Telus, Propharm etc., that develop PMS for use in Saskatchewan must successfully complete conformance testing with the Ministry of Health in order to be able to offer this upgrade to pharmacies.

Why is this initiative happening now and why should I integrate to PIP?

In the past, the requirement to use a separate computer application to obtain medication profile information has been identified by pharmacists as a barrier to the increased usage of PIP. Implementing an integrated system via CeRx messaging will address this concern, providing pharmacists’ with a more convenient option to access complete medication profiles and increasing patient safety.

What is the current status of PIP CeRx Integration?

Three PSVs are currently piloting their integrated software in 14 pharmacies across the province. The PIP CeRx Pilot phase is meant to test the integrated system and allow pilot pharmacies to provide important feedback about the software. PSVs along with the PIP Team are working together to address any problems that pilot pharmacies may have encountered while improving and increasing efficiency of the software.

What issues were identified during the Pilot phase and how are they being resolved?

The Pilot pharmacies have provided valuable feedback & comments. Highlighted concerns and follow-up actions include the following:

1. **Data integrity** – there have been a small number of instances where prescription information has not been captured exactly on PIP as transmitted. These instances continue to decrease and are expected to be eliminated as each issue is addressed.
2. **Pick-up message** – initially, after a prescription was given, each patient’s profile had to be updated to reflect that the prescription dispensed has in fact been picked up. Due to feedback that this process caused workflow challenges, the procedure has been modified and now does not require a pick-up message to be sent.

3. **Speed of sending & receiving information to/from PIP** – evaluation of the Internet connection & PIP server performance continues to be addressed and is anticipated to improve. The time to send and receive CeRx messages averages 5-9 seconds for each transmission. The PIP hardware platform is scheduled to be enhanced by the summer to further reduce transmission times.

4. **Managing duplicate therapies & other messages** – the amount of messages appearing for each prescription dispense has been noted as cumbersome to some pilot pharmacies. These concerns are being evaluated and management options will be provided to address this issue in the near future.

5. **Workflow changes** – integration may change the flow of some dispensaries. Because of this, the PIP team is offering workflow support for those pharmacies that are interested. Technician and pharmacist roles and responsibilities in relation to the dispensing process can also be addressed.

Pilot sites have identified workflow challenges regarding the viewing of Nursing Home client PIP profiles, as most dispenses happen amass overnight. The PIP team has worked with the PSVs and the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists (SCP) to address this concern to allow nursing home dispenses to occur without viewing each PIP profile.

**Is there any funding available to help with integration costs?**

In anticipation of the costs associated with integration, the Ministry of Health and the Pharmacists Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) have negotiated two funding initiatives that offer financial support to Saskatchewan pharmacies:

- The first initiative provides pharmacies with 10 cents per individual dispense made through integrated PIP software. This initiative has been extended to March 31, 2012.
- The second initiative, which was announced recently, provides an enhanced payment for individual pharmacies that are successfully integrated to PIP via CeRx messaging. Each pharmacy that is integrated by October 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2011 will receive $4,000. A pharmacy that is integrated between November 1\textsuperscript{st} 2011 and March 31\textsuperscript{st} 2012 will receive $2,000.
- More information about these incentives will be available in the coming weeks.

**A PIP safety improvement story**

The number of community pharmacy views of patient profiles in PIP during August 2010 was approximately 31,000. This represents less than eight per cent of the approximately 400,000 patients who received dispenses in that month. A recent assessment of PIP usage including the 14 pharmacies currently participating in the PIP CeRx Pilot indicates that profile accesses have now increased to 57,000 profile views. This means that 26,000 more medication histories were securely available to pharmacists to help ensure the safety of Saskatchewan patients during drug therapy.
How do I get more information about integration?

The eHealth Saskatchewan Transition and Change Management (TCM) group, as part of the PIP Team, will be contacting all pharmacies in Saskatchewan to arrange pre-implementation and information visits. The TCM group will assist and support pharmacists and pharmacies by providing templates and information on privacy and security, share examples of the impacts and benefits of adopting an integrated PIP/Pharmacy Management System, and to help prepare and support you and your pharmacy for the software transition. Site visits take only a couple of hours and the TCM group will accommodate your busy schedule.

Based on pilot pharmacy experience and feedback, pre-implementation site visits significantly improve the integration experience.

All pharmacies are encouraged to respond positively to the invitation for a pre-implementation site visit from the TCM group before moving forward with the technical upgrade to an integrated PIP/Pharmacy Management System.

The TCM group will be contacting pharmacies in the near future to arrange dates for a pharmacy site visits beginning in April 2011. Site visits will start in Regina and Saskatoon and move to other communities in Saskatchewan later in the spring.

The Ministry of Health, SCP and PAS continue to work together on this initiative to promote patient safety while supporting pharmacist practice. Bulletins and other communications will continue to be distributed to pharmacists and pharmacies on integration activities. Contact the Ministry of Health, SCP or PAS for further information:

- eHealth Saskatchewan (Service Desk) - Tel: 1-888-316-7446;
- SCP – Tel: 306-584-2292 E-mail: info@saskpharm.ca;
- PAS - Tel: 306-359-7277 E-mail: info@skpharmacists.ca