

For Immediate Release

**A First in Hamilton and Niagara:
A Shared Diagnostic Imaging Archive to Enhance Patient Care**

Tuesday, September 15, 2009, Hamilton, ON – St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and Niagara Health System are the first two hospitals in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB -LHIN 4) to join the South Western Ontario Diagnostic Imaging Repository Network (SWODIN). This is a key step towards integrating electronic patient records for hospitals in all of Ontario, and eventually, throughout Canada.

"This is a vital step in the right direction when it comes to patients getting relevant and timely care," says Dr. Dan Franic, Chief, Diagnostic Imaging at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. "The diagnostic imaging repository network will ultimately improve the patient care delivered at all three campuses of St. Joseph's Healthcare by enabling clinicians and radiologists to immediately review all prior relevant investigations resulting in quicker diagnoses and care decisions. Having all prior imaging studies at hand will avoid unnecessary tests, or, the duplication of these, which in some cases will reduce potential risks or needless radiation exposures to our clients, as well as the costs to our healthcare system. Needless to say, the eventual transparency of this information will create a more collaborative partnership with our other healthcare colleagues in the region."

The South Western Ontario Diagnostic Imaging Network is part of Ontario's larger Diagnostic Imaging Repository (DI-r) and Picture Archiving Communication Systems (PACS) initiative. The DI-r project will connect all participating hospitals in LHINs 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the data centre housed in London, Ontario enabling caregivers to share diagnostic images and reports.

Benefits of this repository include:

- Secure, quick and easy access by clinicians and radiologists, to a patient's diagnostic imaging record, including CT scans, ultrasound, mammograms and MRI scans, allowing them to diagnose regardless of patient origin and where the images were acquired.
- Enhanced clinician collaboration and knowledge transfer, resulting in better treatment, fewer retakes and a reduction in radiation exposure.
- Treatment plans developed through collaborating with specialists located in other communities.

"Currently, our patients' digital images are stored in a central archive database in Niagara, allowing physicians and health professionals throughout Niagara access to digital images in their office or in the hospital," says NHS Chief of Radiology

Dr. Amit Mehta. "Access to a digital image repository across LHINs, along with the recent acquisition of two state-of-the-art CT scanners by Niagara Health, means patients will have access to the best possible care here in Niagara. Images acquired in Niagara will be able to be viewed by Hamilton caregivers and eventually province-wide."

The integration of St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton (SJHH) and Niagara Health System (NHS) into the South Western Ontario Diagnostic Imaging Repository Network is being managed by Mohawk Shared Services Inc. (MSSi). MSSi will manage the DI-r service on behalf of the participating hospitals in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN (HNHB) and the Waterloo Wellington LHIN (WW).

Also of significant note, this project will facilitate integration of many different vendor Hospital Information Systems (HIS) & PACS allowing the end user to review the patient record, regardless of the system where the images were acquired and for the first time in Ontario, images from the AGFA PACS will be shared seamlessly with the GE Healthcare DI-r. Other HIS and PACS vendors at SJHH and NHS include Meditech, GE Healthcare and McKesson.

"We are leveraging information technology to deliver improved patient care across the region. Electronic sharing of diagnostic imaging will enable quicker diagnosis and help care providers treat patients sooner, all of this in a more cost effective manner. Everybody wins," says Gerardo Castaneda, CIO St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. "With this initiative, our Mohawk Project Management Office and our implementation team members have shown that clinically relevant eHealth solutions can be delivered successfully, on time and on budget and we are proud to be one of the first hospitals in our region to join this network."

The remaining hospitals in WW LHIN and HNHB LHIN will be connected to the DI-r over the next two years, including Hamilton Health Sciences by early 2010. By the fall of 2011, one-hundred per cent of images taken in the delivery of hospital-based health care to Ontario patients will be digitally stored and shareable among health care providers in the Province.

Rob Devitt, interim CEO eHealth Ontario said "eHealth Ontario is proud to be a funding partner on an initiative that advances health care delivery and benefits Ontarians." "This is a perfect example of how collaboration within the health care system can deliver results that improve patient care," he said.

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