For clinicians working infectious disease control, time is of the essence. The longer a contagious person goes untreated, the higher the risk a disease could spread.

At Lambton Public Health, the cSWO Program’s Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, has been a “game changer,” and is significantly reducing the time between a positive diagnosis and when preventative treatment is administered.

“We need to get medication or vaccines or other treatment into people right away,” said Erin Courtney, Supervisor, Health Protection. “Someone who is a carrier could infect other people and the less interaction that has to happen, the better.”

Erin said before access to electronic health records (EHRs) through ClinicalConnect, her team would follow up a positive lab result with several phone calls to the hospital, the patient and sometimes, their family — all to gather as much information as possible. With access to EHRs, her team can determine the patient’s next of kin, allergies, medication history and lab results, all without having to make a single phone call.

“We did have an issue with a disease where we didn’t get the right information from the lab,” Erin explained. “I said, ‘go into ClinicalConnect and see what this patient presented with,’ and we were able to call the lab and say, ‘let’s get this other test done instead.’

“It was super easy. We didn’t have to call the hospital; we didn’t have to call the patient or their family. We didn’t have to do all of that background work. We just had to go into the EHR, read what happened, and then manage the case from there.”

According to Erin, access to EHRs has also benefited the Sexual Health clinic by helping staff verify whether a patient has received treatment for a sexually transmitted disease.

“If someone comes into the emergency department and is treated for an STD, we will receive the lab report and can go into ClinicalConnect and verify the treatment,” Erin continued.

“If you ask a patient, they might not know the name of the medication they were given, but we can verify it in their EHR, avoiding a call to a hectic emergency department.”

ClinicalConnect is currently in use at eight public health units in south west Ontario, including two in Erie St. Clair.

Lambton Public Health is among the eight health units accessing EHRs in south west Ontario and among the 45,000 health care professionals who are accessing digital health data regularly to better inform care decisions for their patients.
Faster and easier access to patient information with HRM

Health Report Manager (HRM), a provincial digital health solution developed and managed by OntarioMD, allows community physicians and nurse practitioners to electronically receive medical record and diagnostic imaging reports from hospitals and specialty clinics directly into their OntarioMD-certified Electronic Medical Records (EMRs). HRM saves clinics substantial time matching and uploading reports, and ensures reports are received by the correct clinician.

The Waterloo Wellington (WW) region has seen tremendous growth in the deployment and usage of HRM over the past year. Currently, there are 684 clinicians receiving reports through HRM.

After implementing a new digital health tool, such as HRM, it’s imperative that post-implementation follow up occurs to ensure end users are making the most out of the tool’s capabilities. Three months following the day HRM is live for a clinician, the cSWO Program’s Change Management and Adoption Delivery Partner in WW, the eHealth Centre of Excellence, sends a survey to measure the value end users are extracting from the use of HRM.

Since March 2018, 72 per cent of survey participants strongly agreed that HRM provides faster access to hospital reports and 65 per cent strongly agreed that HRM provides faster follow up once their patients have been discharged from hospital.

In a case study published in November 2018, Grand River Sports Medicine Centre (GRSM) indicated that their office reduced the amount of time matching and uploading faxed hospital reports by 50 per cent with the use of HRM.

Tripho Bogias, Business Manager at GRSM, says: “Implementing HRM in our EMR was very simple and quick. It puts patient reports directly in the doctor’s hands and allows admin staff to spend more time on other important tasks.”

In south west Ontario, there are over 2,713 clinicians receiving reports through HRM and all 74 hospital sites are integrated with the provincial solution. HRM is deployed in south west Ontario through a collaborative partnership between OntarioMD and the cSWO Program.

ClinicalConnect semi-annual attestations complete

The semi-annual attestation process for Participant Organizations began on May 1, 2019 and is now complete. During this attestation cycle, approximately 1,000 end user accounts were disabled by Local Registration Authorities, which demonstrates the importance and integrity of this process and helps to ensure the right people have access as required by their Participant Organization. While end user accounts should be disabled at the point which the user no longer requires access to ClinicalConnect and/or the Access Governance System, semi-annual attestations serve as a secondary check-and-balance for Legal Signing Authorities, Privacy Contacts, and Local Registration Authorities of Participant Organizations. To ensure a smooth attestation cycle, it is important that Participants keep their Legal Signing Authority, Privacy Contact, and Local Registration Authority up to date. Any questions regarding attestations from ClinicalConnect Participant Organizations can be directed to support@clinicalconnect.ca or to your local cSWO Change Management & Adoption Delivery Partner.

Leveraging ClinicalConnect in providing mental health services

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Hamilton, Ontario offers a voluntary diversion program to individuals with mental illness who have been charged with a minor offense. The ultimate goal of the diversion program is to stabilize participants’ mental illness, increase their capacity to live successfully in the community, prevent future crime, and reduce their likelihood of becoming acutely ill.¹

The cSWO Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, has been instrumental in allowing CMHA Hamilton to quickly access client diagnoses, thereby enabling them to provide clients with faster access to appropriate health care services.

CMHA Hamilton staff create a treatment plan for new clients to ensure appropriate health care services are provided. To create a holistic care plan, the client’s clinical diagnosis is required. The process of tracking down client information could take several days and often involved contacting multiple health care providers. If a client diagnosis was unavailable, a new psychiatric assessment would need to be completed, further exhausting resources and delaying treatment. Access to electronic health records (EHRs) through ClinicalConnect enables CMHA Hamilton to retrieve client diagnoses immediately and supports quick and effective treatment.

Remarking on their use of ClinicalConnect, a CMHA Health Service Provider stated: “I work within a community mental health agency in Hamilton and access to medical records is essential in both the intake process and the ongoing care of registered clients. ClinicalConnect has allowed me the opportunity to access records in a timely and efficient manner and it allows me the opportunity to access medical records from other neighboring jurisdictions. This type of access to medical records has been particularly useful when assisting individuals who are new to Hamilton or who live a transient lifestyle as well as individuals who, due to their mental health issues, are not able to recall details about past medical care. Due to the use of ClinicalConnect some of the barriers that these individuals experience in accessing quality care are reduced. Thank you ClinicalConnect!”

Enriching patient care with digital health solutions

Important real-time patient care information and data for 3.6 million south west Ontario residents is available online for approved health care professionals. The electronic health record system is in place from Windsor to Tobermory to Guelph and through Niagara Falls. Electronic health records provide quick and easy access to the information that health care professionals need to make proactive decisions and support positive patient experiences. Patient information that is available includes records from hospitals, cancer care centres, and home and community care services.

Electronic health records make patient information – from lab reports and medication history to x-rays – available in one place for approved health care professionals.

Electronic health records are safe, secure and designed to protect patients’ privacy.

Access to electronic health records helps reduce medication errors and the need to repeat lab and diagnostic tests.

Providing physicians and other health care professionals with fast and secure access to their patients’ information helps them make informed decisions to enhance the delivery of care.

Electronic health records can be viewed using the secure, web-based portal, ClinicalConnect™, which supports care in health care organizations:

- **74** HOSPITAL SITES
- **83** PRIMARY AND SPECIALIST CARE GROUP PRACTICES AT
- **1,130** PHYSICIAN SOLE PRACTITIONERS (Physicians who practice independently in an office)
- **130** COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (long-term care homes, mental health and addictions services)
- **8** PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS AT
- **86** COMMUNITY PHARMACIES AT

Electronic health records, viewed through ClinicalConnect, are being used by approved health care providers:

- **2,311** FAMILY PHYSICIANS
- **4,527** SPECIALIST PHYSICIANS
- **11,259** REGISTERED NURSES
- **10,359** CLINICAL SUPPORT WORKERS
- **4,403** ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (diagnostic, technical, therapeutic and direct patient care and support services)
- **1,035** PHARMACISTS
- **3,190** REGISTERED PRACTICAL NURSES
- **45,180** TOTAL APPROVED USERS
- **719** NURSE PRACTITIONERS

**LATEST DIGITAL HEALTH NEWS**

Having access to digital health information supports a vascular nurse practitioner (NP) in providing standardized and quality care to patients seen in clinic.

Read a recently-released cSWO Program analysis and research case that highlights the benefits for patients requiring vascular surgery when the NP accesses electronic health records.

Users in these professions represent 84% of the total number of approved users, working in both acute care and community care organizations.

All information is of June 30, 2019.