

Digital health + virtual care = providing care from anywhere:

Health Report Manager delivers COVID-19 information

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the value of digital health tools to move patient information between health care providers quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively. When you add the rapid and large-scale adoption of virtual tools to provider toolkits, our health care system suddenly becomes empowered to deliver patient care from anywhere.

The willingness and ability of Ontario's primary care providers and specialists to embrace these new technologies has been central to the success of digital health and virtual tools to enable care for patients who contract COVID-19, as well as those who need continuous care under normal circumstances.

OntarioMD has been working with community-based physicians and nurse practitioners and their practice staff for the past 15 years to equip them with digital health tools to enhance the excellent patient care they provide and help them gain practice efficiency. We have gone from initial skepticism and resistance in 2005 to a surge in demand for digital health tools and advice on virtual tools.

Our Health Report Manager (HRM) digital health tool has been at the forefront of this demand since it launched in 2013 and we've been onboarding clinicians in record time since the pandemic came to the fore in Ontario in early March 2020. HRM has eliminated much of the paper coming from hospitals and specialty clinics to physicians and nurse practitioners who use a certified electronic medical record (EMR). It also helps them to improve care transitions between hospitals and home by receiving eNotifications before patients are discharged, and the discharge summaries as soon as they are available. Receiving this information in real time keeps patients safe and

has done wonders for improving communication between hospitals and primary care.

HRM continues to add enhancements – more hospitals and specialty clinics sending reports, and more types of reports being sent, including eNotifications, OTN telehomecare reports, patient summaries from eVisits, consultation reports from mental health facilities, consultation reports for referrals, and more.

The latest HRM enhancements support physicians and nurse practitioners to clearly identify patient information related to COVID-19. We are working with hospitals to identify any COVID-19-related encounters and deliver these reports to physicians' EMRs through HRM. These alerts enable physicians to monitor patients who may have the virus – even if they have not yet tested positive. Hospitals that are offering dedicated COVID-19 Assessment Centres, such as Michael Garron Hospital in Toronto and Guelph General Hospital, have created notifications to be delivered through HRM to family physicians when patients are assessed.

We also worked with Ontario Health to let physicians and nurse practitioners know as soon as the COVID-19 test results were available in the Ontario Laboratories Information System (OLIS). HRM COVID-19 notifications prompt clinicians to go and check OLIS. Time is of the essence when you're deal-

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ing with a deadly virus that has spread so quickly across the globe. Patients who test positive can be monitored right away, and those who test negative can breathe a sigh of relief.

The beauty of HRM is that it pushes patient information straight to clinicians' EMRs so they can make informed decisions based on timely information. They don't have to go hunting for information in multiple web-based tools requiring multiple passwords. Clinicians prefer to have everything in one place, and that place of choice is their EMR. Clinicians receive COVID-19 notifications in their EMRs and can query OLIS directly from their EMRs. Some are using the provincial clinical viewers to access OLIS lab results. That's fine too for those who prefer this method or who do not have EMR-integrated access to OLIS. OntarioMD is onboarding clinicians on behalf of the province to the ConnectingOntario ClinicalViewer (ehealthontario.on.ca) to provide them with access.

HRM helps integrate Ontario's health system by eliminating barriers to information flow between hospitals and other health care provider sites, and clinicians. HRM has become one of Ontario's most successful digital health assets thanks to its ability to deliver patient information from more than 500 hospital and specialty clinic sites to the EMRs of more than

11,000 clinicians across the province. HRM has digitally delivered over 70 million reports – over two million reports consistently every month. These volumes and the demise of paper reports mean cost avoidance for the health care system of \$40 million a year. This cost avoidance increases every month as more clinicians and sending sites use HRM. And more clinicians will be using HRM as they join Ontario Health Teams (OHTs). OHTs are implementing digital health tools across the province aligned with requirements and policy direction outlined in Ontario's *Digital Health Playbook*. HRM is one of the enabling digital health tools identified in the *Playbook*.

Digital health tools have become indispensable to primary care and to the broader health care system. COVID-19 has highlighted their importance to move patient information around the system without any physical contact. HRM has proven that it has the flexibility and the scalability when needed to deliver information from a variety of sectors, organizations and settings to community-based clinicians to continue and co-ordinate the care patients require to keep them safe and healthy.

If you are not using HRM yet and use a certified EMR, OntarioMD staff can help you implement HRM. Contact us at support@ontariomd.com to get started. ■

Virtual Care and Cybersecurity Resources for Physicians

Best Practices Around Virtual Care

- The OMA continues to receive questions about best practices around virtual care. We have developed resources and information about expanded access to virtual care in the context of COVID-19, including information about billing codes. View the OMA virtual care web page at www.oma.org/virtualcare.
- OntarioMD has also compiled a list of vendors with virtual care products, including your EMR vendor, as well as other resources to help you understand how your colleagues are using virtual tools in their practices. View the OntarioMD virtual care web page at ontariomd.news.

Cybersecurity Information and Privacy & Security Training

- Cybercrime is evolving quickly and affects many areas of our daily interactions. Cyberattacks continue to grow and put everyone at higher risk, which requires us to become more vigilant and familiar with IT security. Given the increased use of technology during COVID-19, the OMA has provided cybersecurity information for all members on our website at content.oma.org/cybersecurity. This page will be updated regularly with information on cybersecurity issues that may affect you.
- OntarioMD offers a comprehensive Privacy and Security Training Module to help support the use of digital health tools in the medical practice. The module can be completed any time, and is available free of charge to physicians and their staff. OntarioMD also offers a range of bulletins and information on keeping patient data secure. The need for this training and information is more important than ever, so visit ontariomd.ca today! ■