

Evaluating benefits is an important component of the connecting South West Ontario (cSWO) Program that helps to support and demonstrate the realization of health system benefits through the adoption of an electronic health record (EHR). By pursuing the measurement of organizational value (improvements in the efficiency of care delivery such as time-savings and redirected resources) and clinical value (patients undergo fewer unnecessary tests, patients have improved access to care), patients ultimately benefit from higher quality, better informed clinical decision-making.

The cSWO Benefits Realization program uses a research-based approach to identify areas of clinical best practice that are affected by the use of the electronic health record (EHR), and works collaboratively with clinicians to understand the value of the EHR. This formative evaluation process informs change management and adoption, and enables clinicians to use the EHR more effectively. This research does not include the use of any personal health information.

This document is one in a series of case studies which describe the clinical value of the EHR in different clinical settings and contexts, particularly with respect to clinical best practices. The work of the cSWO Benefits Realization program is ongoing; depending on the circumstance, these cases occasionally raise questions for further investigation, and clinicians are invited to participate in benefits evaluation to continue to develop these answers.

Value statement

The cSWO Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, facilitates the prevention and control of infectious diseases and tuberculosis by providing public health officials with timely access to health information, enhancing efficiency when investigating a reported case.

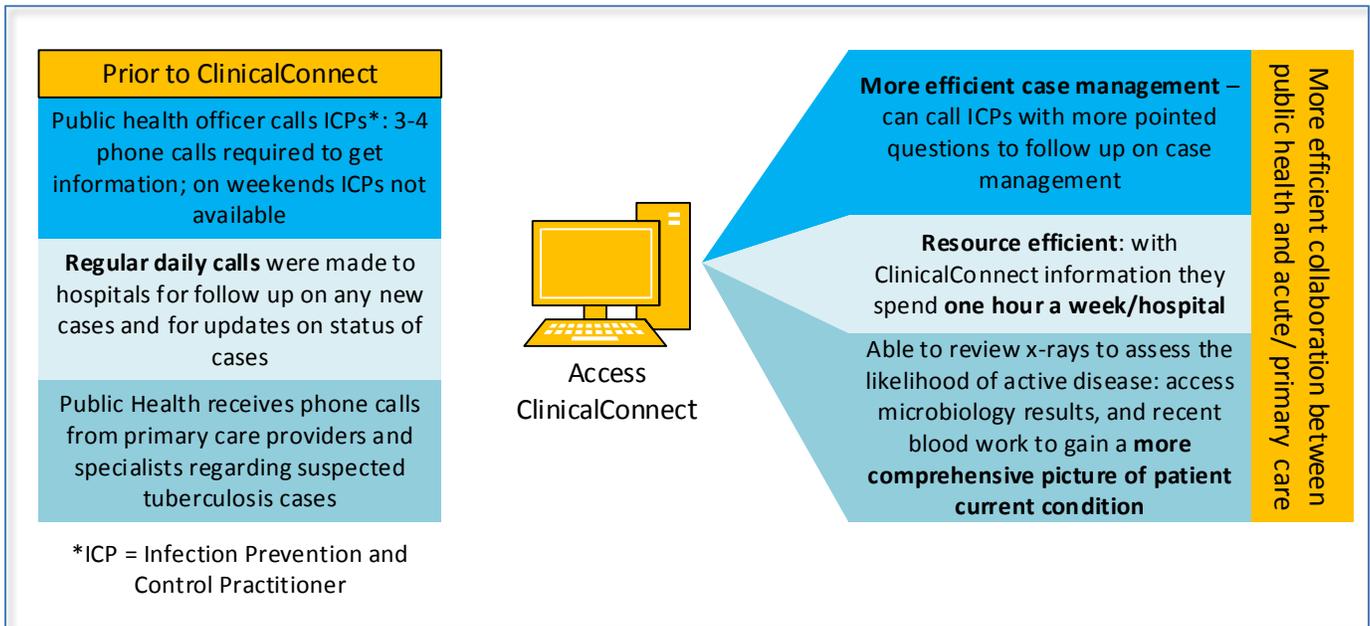
Infectious diseases and tuberculosis prevention and control

As per regulations designated by the Ontario Public Health Standards, there is a board of health (Public Health) in each of the 14 geographic regions across the province, and these boards are responsible for providing public health management to minimize the risk of infectious disease cases and outbreaks.¹ Whenever public health officials receive reports of an individual contracting a suspected or confirmed contagious disease, they will embark on an often resource-intensive case investigation during which they will connect with the affected patient, their primary care providers and hospital personnel to ensure that appropriate measures are employed to contain the threat of contagion. This process involves determining the presence of the disease if not yet confirmed, assessing whether the correct steps for case management have occurred and intervening if necessary. This investigation must happen in a timely manner to ensure appropriate case management and prevent the contagion from spreading.

Adoption of the EHR facilitates infectious diseases prevention and tuberculosis control

One of the five goals in the Ontario Public Health Strategic Plan is to “...strengthen the public health sector’s capacity and infrastructure by focusing on information and knowledge systems, collaborative mechanisms, and a highly competent work force.”² Adoption of ClinicalConnect supports this goal by contributing to the public health information and knowledge system and by supporting efficient collaboration between public health and clinicians.

ClinicalConnect is a digital health tool that provides real-time access to, amongst other types of personal health information, lab reports and transcribed doctor’s notes from hospitals, allowing Waterloo Region Public Health officials to gain further insight when investigating a suspected or confirmed case of communicable disease. With the click of a button, authorized users can view real-time information about the afflicted patient’s current state, treatment, and the infection prevention and control measures employed in the primary or acute care setting. This results in a more efficient and timely case management process.



Benefits of accessing ClinicalConnect include:

- Improved accuracy and more comprehensive picture of patient’s situation, compared to relying on the patient and multiple individuals in the circle of care to relay information in confirming appropriate case management
- Time savings for public health and hospital resources
- Access to test results reduces the need to contact the patient or clinicians for questioning – this reduces patient stress and saves patients from unnecessary testing

Testimonials

“ClinicalConnect has benefitted Infectious Diseases and Tuberculosis (IDTB) case management by providing timely, comprehensive results which in turn has led to improvements in providing prompt, efficient, accurate patient care and follow-up.”

Glenna Murray – Public Health Nurse

“ClinicalConnect has greatly improved our efficiency with case management in our infectious diseases division. It also greatly increases our ability to get the whole clinical picture for a client before having to consult with the client or our community partners”

David Aoki – Manager, Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Questions

For questions, comments, or to participate in cSWO Program’s Benefits Realization program, please contact: Lirije Hyseni, Benefits Realization Specialist, eHealth Centre of Excellence: Lirije.hyseni@ehealthce.ca

Sources

1. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario public health standards 2008. Revised May 2016. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2016. Available from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/ophs_2008.pdf
2. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Public Health Ontario Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019: Evidence, knowledge and action for a healthier Ontario. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario; 2013.