

NEWS RELEASE

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PROGRESS MADE, BUT MUCH STILL TO BE DONE BEFORE BRITISH COLUMBIANS ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

VICTORIA – The government has made progress on its electronic health records (EHR) system, but there is still a long way to go before the system is fully in place, says Auditor General John Doyle in his latest report, *Electronic Health Record Implementation in British Columbia*.

An EHR is a secure and private record of an individual's health history and care, intended to be collected over a person's lifetime. The development of an EHR system has been supported by the federal government since 2001, and B.C. committed to accelerating its EHR development in 2004.

“Electronic health records can lead to faster, safer and more effective treatment of patients – if they're developed and implemented effectively,” said Doyle. “It is a complex and high-risk endeavour, but one with many potential benefits for the health of British Columbians.”

The audit examined the Ministry of Health Services' mechanisms for guiding, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of its EHR system. As the report details, progress is being made in building and deploying the EHR system, despite an early lack of coordination and tactical planning by the ministry. While progress has been slower than initially planned, the ministry expects to deploy the core components of the system by 2013.

“We found that the Ministry of Health Services now has most of the mechanisms in place, or in development, to provide effective management of EHR implementation,” said Doyle. “However, there is still a long way to go before British Columbians will enjoy the benefits of an EHR system. Once built, it will still need to be fully integrated across the health sector and regularly used by health professionals in treating their patients.”

Five provincial audit offices and the federal Office of the Auditor General worked collaboratively on the audit of EHR systems. Each office is issuing a separate report and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada will be issuing a joint summary report in April 2010.

The report is available at www.bcauditor.com.

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2009/10 Report #9– Electronic Health Record Implementation in BC

For further information, please contact:

Office of the Auditor General, 8 Bastion Square, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Tel: 250 387-6803