

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 electronic health records (EHRs). 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 Analysis and Research program uses a research-based approach to identify areas of clinical best practice that are affected by the use of EHRs, and works collaboratively with clinicians to understand the value of EHRs. This formative evaluation process informs change management and adoption, and enables clinicians to use EHRs 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 EHRs in different clinical settings and contexts, particularly with respect to clinical best practices. The work of the cSWO Analysis and Research program is ongoing; depending on the circumstance, these cases occasionally raise questions for further investigation, and clinicians are invited to participate in analysis and research to continue to develop these answers.

Value statement

Access to electronic health records (EHRs) through the cSWO Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, enables Burlington and Area Midwives to provide quality primary care and ensure safety for their patients, which in turn enhances the patient experience.

Midwifery practice in Ontario

Ontario was the first province in Canada to regulate midwifery, with 600 midwives registered in 2013 and growing rapidly. The scope of practice for midwives in Ontario includes the provision of primary care services to low-risk pregnant women throughout pregnancy, labor, and 6 weeks postpartum.¹ Midwives work in home, hospital and community settings, including midwifery clinics, maternity centres and birth centres. They access emergency services as needed, and where available, maintain hospital privileges for the admission of patients and their newborns.² Midwives attend approximately 3,000 home births annually.³

Canadian research on the benefits of midwifery-led care has found there to be fewer interventions such as epidurals, induction, cesarean and instrumental deliveries, and that women are more likely to experience birth medication-free. Findings have also shown that women cared for by a midwife were three times more likely to be satisfied with their care compared with women in obstetric care.¹

Burlington and Area Midwives (BAM) was officially established in 2006 as a sister practice of the Community Midwives of Halton, which has served clients and families in Burlington and neighboring communities since the 1990's.

EHR access improves patient safety and quality of care

Midwives at BAM have been using ClinicalConnect ever since its introduction at Joseph Brant Hospital over 5 years ago and are very passionate about the value access to electronic health records provides. ClinicalConnect is accessed by the midwives both during initial history taking with the patient and ongoing pregnancy care.

During history taking, they are able to verify what the patient has told them and fill in any gaps in the patient's understanding by checking for abnormal PAP test results, operative reports for past cesarians, and any bloodwork or past hospital admissions that might be relevant to pregnancy care. Without access to ClinicalConnect, written requests for release of information have to be sent to the relevant health service providers, often involving two or three faxes per request and several days to get the results. With electronic health records available for 75-80 per cent of patients, the administrative burden has been significantly reduced.

ClinicalConnect has had a great impact on ensuring patient safety during ongoing care, particularly in the area of obtaining test results quickly to enable effective decision-making on required treatments of infections such as urinary tract (UTI) and Group B streptococcal (strep). All patients must be tested five weeks before labour for Group B strep infections so that they can be treated during labour to avoid transmission of this potentially life-threatening infection to the newborn. In the past, the patient could go into labour early before the results were available so the midwives wouldn't know whether treatment was required and would often have to try to call the lab to see if they could get access to the results, resulting in increased stress for both the patient and the midwife.

Midwives are able to provide better education on women's health care by accessing the test results while meeting with the patient. Access to ClinicalConnect also improves the clinic/scheduling efficiency by avoiding delays in getting bloodwork in advance of the visit and requiring the patient to return for a subsequent visit when the results are available to determine treatment.

Lucia D'Amore, one of the midwives at BAM, tracked her use of ClinicalConnect during two days of clinic where she had a mix of visit types, including new patient intake, newborn follow-up and on-going pregnancy follow-up. Of the 21 patients seen, she accessed EHRs for six patients, or 30 per cent, which upon reflection, meant that administrative time spent calling for lab results and sending releases of information to other health service providers was saved for those 30 per cent. Figure 1 shows the results of the tracking in more detail.

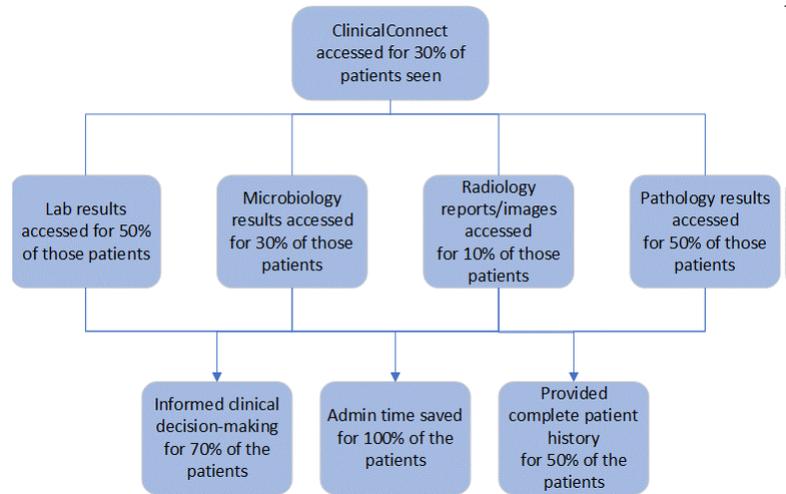


Figure 1: Benefits of midwife access to EHRs

Testimonial

"I have been a midwife for over 16 years so I certainly remember what it was like to practice before being able to access results through ClinicalConnect. Being able to accurately verify a patient's history by accessing operative reports and previous lab results has led to safer and more comprehensive care, as well as a decreased workload for administrative staff. While these benefits are helpful to many care providers - the unique aspect of midwifery is that we are on-call for our patients 24/7. Being able to look up a result when someone is paging you at 3am in labour is beyond helpful. Can't imagine ever going back to not having this data at my finger tips."

Lucia D'Amore, Midwife, Burlington and Area Midwives

Questions

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Sources

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