



Canadian Primary Care
Sentinel Surveillance
Network

Attn: News, Assignment, Health, Political Editors and Reporters

NEWS RELEASE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH NETWORK First pan-Canadian chronic disease surveillance network gives family doctors new insight into patient health and care

VANCOUVER, BC (October 14, 2010)—Family doctors and health planners now have access to greater health information, thanks to a new and secure source of pan-Canadian health data launched today at [Family Medicine Forum 2010](#) in Vancouver. The [Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network](#) (CPCSSN) is a ground-breaking initiative—the first of its kind in Canada—to help family physicians better understand and manage the chronic diseases affecting their patients, as well as health planners face the challenge of controlling chronic diseases in Canadian population.

As part of the [College of Family Physicians of Canada](#) (CFPC), CPCSSN makes it possible to securely collect chronic disease information from patients' electronic medical records (EMRs). The network, which has been in development for two years, has received \$11.7 million in funding over the next five years from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (PHAC), and will continue its collaboration with the [Canadian Institute for Health Information](#) (CIHI).

“The Government of Canada recognizes the impact of chronic disease in Canada and is committed to the health and well-being of Canadians,” said Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health. “This investment will substantially increase our capacity to understand and address chronic disease.”

Representing the Minister of Health at the Forum, Minister Stockwell Day expressed his support for partnership funding. “This initiative demonstrates the Government of Canada’s readiness to work with partners, such as CPCSSN to further enhance the surveillance of chronic disease in Canada,” said Minister Day, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway.

CPCSSN currently focuses on collecting data on five chronic diseases – hypertension, diabetes, COPD, depression and osteoarthritis. Primary care physicians need access to every possible resource to help their patients manage these conditions. “With more than

one in three Canadians living with one or more chronic health conditions¹, the toll on individuals and our health system is enormous,” said Dr. Richard Birtwhistle, CPCSSN chair and Research Director, Centre for Studies in Primary Care, Queen’s University. “A family doctor’s office is typically the first point of contact for Canadians to seek health care yet, until this program, we didn’t have access to the wealth of information that is collected there.”

CPCSSN places a premium on the privacy and security of the data being collected. All patient identifying information is removed. The de-identified data are merged and remain safely stored in a highly secure facility. During the transfer of data from one location to another, both the information itself and the channels through which it travels are encrypted. This process has been scrutinized and approved by a Research Ethics Board in every province in which CPCSSN operates. The process has also been approved by Health Canada’s Research Ethics Board.

The 140 family doctors who currently participate in CPCSSN (referred to as “physician sentinels”)—and the 600 to 1,000 physicians that CPCSSN aims to attract by 2015—demonstrate a commitment to primary care research and evidence-based medicine. They have a willingness to examine their practice and make changes where needed for the benefit of their patients.

“As the voice of family medicine in Canada, we understand the importance of primary care research,” said Dr. Cathy MacLean, President of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. “We know that primary care practices offer a very rich source of data for chronic disease surveillance, and CPCSSN makes that possible. Thanks to CPCSSN, we will have a richer, more detailed understanding of the epidemiology of chronic disease and its risk factors than ever before.”

Over the next five years, CPCSSN’s central repository of surveillance data will provide health planners and researchers with a detailed understanding of the prevalence and progression of chronic disease in Canada. Since the data will be both longitudinal and current, policy makers and researchers will be able to understand today’s trends and historic patterns. CPCSSN reports, available and sent to physician sentinels quarterly, will also allow family doctors to identify best practices in the prevention, control and management of chronic diseases.

About the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (PHAC)

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is the main Government of Canada agency responsible for public health in Canada. PHAC’s primary goal is to strengthen Canada’s

¹ *Population Patterns of Chronic Health Conditions, Co-morbidity and Healthcare Use in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice*; Anne-Marie Broemeling, Diane E. Watson, Farrah Prebtani and on behalf of councillors on the Health Outcomes Steering Committee of the Health Council of Canada; with data from the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS Cycle 3.1)

capacity to protect and improve the health of Canadians and to help reduce pressures on the health-care system.

About the [Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network](#) (CPCSSN)
CPCSSN is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada under a contribution agreement with the College of Family Physicians of Canada on behalf of nine Practice Based Research Networks (PBRNs) associated with Departments of Family Medicine at universities across Canada. CPCSSN also collaborates with the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

About the [College of Family Physicians of Canada](#) (CFPC)
CFPC is the voice of family medicine in Canada. Representing 24,000 members across the country, it is the professional organization responsible for establishing standards for the training, certification and lifelong education of family physicians and for advocating on behalf of the specialty of family medicine, family physicians and their patients. The CFPC accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 17 medical schools.

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An audiocast of the launch event is available.

<http://www.newswire.ca/en/webcast/viewEvent.cgi?eventID=3240820>

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