

Invest in a single national electronic health record for primary care to benefit Canadians

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Canada should invest in a single national electronic health record for primary care to improve the health of Canadians, argues an editorial in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

"Although switching will be painful, one primary care electronic health record will make apparently insolvable problems solvable," writes Dr. Nav Persaud, a scientist at the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario. "Sharing records among primary care sites would become easier and the creation of similar data sets for research purposes would be an added benefit."

The current patchwork system of [electronic health records](#) used in individual clinics, hospitals, laboratories and pharmacies means that, while electronic, most records cannot connect and share information with one another. As well, fax machines are still used for communication between [health care providers](#).

A single primary care electronic health record will improve primary care and [patient care](#) in hospitals and specialty clinics by allowing them to connect with, and update, patient records for timely information exchange.

Canada Health Infoway, the organization responsible for promoting digital health solutions, should be mandated to select and adapt, with the help of physicians and patients, the single electronic health record for

[primary care](#) in Canada.

Other [health systems](#) that have successfully done this, such as the US Department of Veteran Affairs and SingHealth in Singapore, can serve as models.

"If we are truly committed to improving the health of Canadians, a bold move such as this is needed," writes Dr. Persaud.

More information: *CMAJ* (2019).

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