



A recent workshop sponsored jointly by Canada Health Inforoute (*Inforoute*), the Canadian Society of Telehealth (CST), and Canada's Health Informatics Association (COACH), was held in Toronto to examine the challenges, issues and strategies on the **"Converging Silos of Telehealth and e-Records"** (e.g. EHRs, EMRs). This workshop, the first of its kind, was held over a two-day period (May 1st and 2nd) at the St. Andrew's Conference Centre. This gathering brought together more than 48 frontline workers and subject matter experts from the fields of Primary Care, Telehealth, Nurse Call Lines, and e-Health from across Canada. In addition to improving the quality and timeliness of care, *Inforoute* has identified health system savings of \$6 Billion per year with EHR adoption; with this in mind the participants *embarked* in earnest discussions with clear objectives in mind.

The following workshop objectives helped to guide the in-depth discussions:

- Build a common understanding of Telehealth, e-Records (EHR/EMR) and related components
- Become familiar with the related status, priorities and issues in jurisdictions and across the country
- Discuss common issues and challenges
- Learn about various approaches to overcome the issues and challenges
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and convergence
- Actively contribute to development of an action plan for convergence and integration of Telehealth and e-Records (EHR/EMR) components

Following meaningful dialogue over the two days, participants agreed that technology convergence and integration will be achieved over time and is the responsibility of industry, the CIOs and all related stakeholders.

Participants determined that there are in fact five elements, the **5-"R"s**, which form the foundation for convergence:

1. The **R**ight information
2. About the **R**ight client
3. Available to the **R**ight person
4. In the **R**ight place
5. At the **R**ight time

Key factors about Telehealth and e-records were identified by the workshop participants, including:

- The need to increase awareness of Telehealth and promote the very essence of Telehealth as “beyond” videoconferencing - *“Telehealth – Eliminating Distance in the Practice of Healthcare and Wellness”*. It is about transmitting voice, data, images, and information rather than moving patients or health practitioners and educators
- Telehealth needs to leverage the existing service delivery models and become main stream, identical to and behaving as any other point of service encounter, making investment in Telehealth is a strategic decision as opposed to a tactical one
- It is essential that an integrated approach be taken with Telehealth within the EHR space

When the workshop concluded, it was unanimous among participants, that convergence of Telehealth and with the EHR and EMR will allow patients to receive timely and high quality care across various frontiers, regardless of time or geographic locale. This convergence will allow for a continuous stream of medical actions supported by accurate and timely clinical information.

Convergence will take us into the 21st century and will be equally mainstream with the "same place, same time" centuries long medical-care paradigm.

Convergence will foster collaboration and make multi-disciplinary work and Primary care become a reality.