

Capital Health pilots innovative web based technology that enhances patient care

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Pixalere pilot project shows improved care to patients and accessibility to home care nurses and physician specialists

Early results of the pilot of Pixalere, an Internet-based, wireless, wound management system, show improved Home Care delivery and treatment of patients with complex wounds, particularly in remote areas within the Capital Health region. Capital Health is the first region in Alberta to pilot the Pixalere technology.

"The Pixalere wound management system provides wound care professionals with virtual and instant access to the most up-to-date, wound assessment information via the Internet, thereby speeding up service to patients, reducing healing times of chronic wounds and improving communication between clients, Home Care nurses and specialists," explains Dr. Gordon Searles, Capital Health dermatologist and clinical associate professor with the University of Alberta's Department of Medicine.

A home care nurse using Pixalere can securely, and wirelessly, transmit a patient's clinical information and digital photos of the wound to consulting nurses and doctors at their offices, reducing expensive and time-consuming trips by clients and their families to hospitals. Upon assessing the lesion, a wound ostomy nurse can either recommend treatment directly to the home care nurse, or forward the image and information to a specialist physician for further consultation.

With the traditional approach of in-person visits, the assessment and referral process by the wound ostomy nurse and physician could take as long as several weeks.

"Pixalere has allowed us to provide faster consultations between home care nurses, wound ostomy nurses, and physicians," explains Dr. Searles. "The specialist team can now access a client's clinical information quickly and respond within a matter of minutes and hours, as opposed to days and weeks. Nurses using Pixalere have reduced their travel time by 50 per cent and are now assessing three times the number of clients."

A pilot project, which began in May, includes Home Care offices in North East Edmonton, Morinville and Redwater, in addition to the Capital Care Dickinsfield Continuing Care Centre. To date, more than 80 home care clients have participated and 300 wound assessments have occurred.

"Pixalere demonstrates the potential to accelerate the healing time of complex wounds by limiting delays between consultations; a significant finding that impacts staff workload and improves a client's quality of life," notes Dr. Searles.

The Capital Health region's population is currently over one million and it is expected to grow by more than 115,000 people by 2010. Many of Capital Health's home care clients reside in rural communities within the 11,850 sq. km Capital Health region. Of the 22,000 home care clients admitted last year, nearly 3,000 were treated for complex wounds such as pressure sores and diabetic ulcers – accounting for more than 74,000 client hours annually.

"Innovations in technology provide significant opportunities in the community to improve quality and access to care," says Marguerite Rowe, Chief Operating Officer, Community Care, Rehabilitation & Mental Health. "Pixalere is a good example of one such technology. By using this application, people who get home-based care for their wounds throughout the region can become more active participants in their care."

The Picalere pilot program has been supported by a Telehealth innovation grant provided by Alberta Health and Wellness, as well as strong support from Johnson and Johnson Medical Products, a division of Johnson & Johnson Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Rogers Wireless, TELUS, and WebMed Technology, a B.C. based software provider.

Capital Health is recognized as a centre for health innovation through technology. New technologies are transforming the health system by improving patient care and safety, advancing new treatments and offering better health management tools. Capital Health is working with leading technology organizations to develop technology based health solutions to advance patient care and improve the overall quality of the health system.

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Capital Health is one of Canada's largest integrated academic health regions, providing complete health services to 1 million residents in the cities of Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove and St. Albert, and the counties of Leduc, Parkland, Strathcona and Sturgeon (and communities within their geographical areas), as well as the Town of Devon and communities in the eastern part of Yellowhead County. Capital Health serves a total of 1.6 million people across central and northern Alberta, providing specialized services such as trauma and burn treatment, organ transplants and high-risk obstetrics.

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