AMA DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON HEALTH INFORMATICS

The Alberta Medical Association recognizes its role in supporting health informatics and related provincial initiatives that are driven by the need for better patient care and outcomes, including improved access, continuity of care, timeliness, quality of care and informational continuity.

In addition to the above, the AMA has the critical role of ensuring that patient and physician interests are represented and that the informatics initiatives enhance each physician's ability to provide optimal patient care, while respecting the need for efficient workflows.

To this end, the AMA will work with all stakeholders to influence priorities and represent the interests of its members, and to ensure that all initiatives support the patient/physician relationship and the ethical and professional duties and obligations that physicians have to their patients and to society at large.

The principles and policies are based on the current state and are the drivers for the detailed strategy. The document is a broad policy statement and the various components are best considered together in the complete context.

Given the rapidly changing health informatics landscape, it is suggested that the principles and policy that follow be considered within a five-year timeframe and revisited every five years or as needed to remain current.

PRINCIPLES

To aid in policy development, the AMA has established guiding foundational principles that specifically reflect the AMA's accountability to physicians as key stakeholders and the crucial role they play in the success of health informatics initiatives.

Tools and Technology

- Existing technology and investment is leveraged where feasible.
- Potential financial burden on physicians is considered when evaluating new technologies.
- Initiatives support the long-term goal of system integration and information exchange.
- All implementations take into account the potential requirement for future integration with new technologies, and ongoing upgrades.
- The AMA supports the ultimate goal of an integrated patient record.
- Physicians and patients have tools that allow for seamless, secure and timely communications.
- Physicians have tools that enable effective and efficient data capture to support both robust patient records and accurate reporting of data.
- Physicians have current and effective electronic medical record systems and clinical decision support tools available on demand at the point of care, to support quality improvement and continuity of care.

Patient Care and Engagement

- All initiatives support and enhance the patient's central role in health care, including recognition of the importance of patient wishes, public awareness and engagement.
- Patients are well represented and their interests reflected.
- Due consideration must be given to the patient experience within the health care system and the evolution of a patient's health and conditions over time.
- Education and communication strategies must be in place to support patients as changing technologies improve access and control of their health information.
- The AMA recognizes the needs of underserved populations including Indigenous Peoples.
- Development of the Patient's Medical Home, support for the provision of quality care and patient privacy will be prioritized ahead of financial and technological considerations.
- Physicians have appropriate and timely access to all relevant patient data to inform them of their practice in comparison to their peers with the goal of improving the care of their patient population.
- All providers within a patient's circle of care have timely access to all relevant patient information.

Physician Engagement and Governance

- Consideration must be given to the burden on physicians, including the impact on physician health and the potential for burnout, resulting from ever-emerging IT initiatives.
- Change management support and comprehensive transition and communications strategies are in place to support and encourage use of new technologies, work flows and data.
- Physicians are well represented and have an effective, ongoing voice in governance structures and system design.
- Physician choice is supported when in accordance with the policies and guiding principles.
- Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities across all stakeholder groups are well articulated.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Physicians require tools and support at a cost that is financially viable.
- Initiatives that accrue benefits to the health system should be supported by health system resources and not by individual physicians.
- Informatics success will be tied to alignment of incentives, including remuneration.
- The AMA recognizes that enabling patient access to their personal health information is of critical importance.
- Physicians need to be represented early on in the design phase of provincial initiatives to provide clinical input and assist with impact assessment.
- Physician championship and commitment, including peer leader engagement and executive sponsorship, are critical for the success of any informatics initiative.
- Uptake and ultimate success of any initiative will only be realized if value is recognized for physicians and patients.

- Ongoing two-way communications with both physicians and patients is critical to the success of all initiatives.
- Security and confidentiality of patient records must be maintained.
- Privacy obligations such as current and complete Privacy Impact Assessments, Information and Data Sharing Agreements and Information Manager Agreements must be clear and simplified as much as possible.
- Impact to clinical practices must be acknowledged and minimized wherever possible.
- Use of secondary data for clinical improvement should be recognized for clinical competency credit.
- Applicable data must be accessible to support physicians' medical and legal responsibilities.

POLICY

The policy statements have been grouped to reflect the four pillars which represent the current priorities in Alberta's health informatics environment:

- AHS Connect Care and Provincial Clinical Information System (please see https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/cis.aspx for further information)
- Integration of Community Information
- Evolution of Alberta Netcare and the Provincial Personal Patient Portal
- Data Analytics and Health System Use

AHS Connect Care

- The AMA supports AHS Connect Care as having significant clinical improvement and care transformation potential.
- The AMA will actively support and coordinate efforts involving AMA representatives on the AHS Information Stewardship Committee (and other committees as needed).
- The AMA will explore opportunities to align and integrate high value Connect Care tools with community EMRs.
- The AMA supports the unique role and responsibilities that physicians have regarding information capture.
- The AMA believes that member engagement and representation is a critical component to the design, testing and implementation of AHS's Connect Care and Provincial Clinical Information System initiatives.

Integration of Community Information

- The AMA considers community information integration with Netcare to be a key provincial health system priority.
- The AMA supports the expansion and evolution of existing infrastructure, including but not limited to community EMRs and Netcare, to provide additional clinical and health system value.
- The AMA recognizes that ongoing physician and patient representation is essential for all initiatives that integrate community information with the broader provincial health information system.
- The AMA will advocate for change management support to assist physicians in adapting to workflow and practice changes that result from provincial information integration initiatives.

- AMA supports the development and implementation of a strategy that facilitates data integration between Netcare and AHS Connect Care.
- Continue to work with provincial stakeholders to simplify and standardize the process of creating and maintaining information and data sharing agreements

Evolution of Alberta Netcare and the Provincial Personal Patient Portal

- The AMA recognizes the need for alignment and integration between community EMR, AHS Connect Care and provincial patient portals.
- The AMA supports virtual care and secure messaging between patients and physicians as key components in improving patient care, with careful consideration given to safety, security and privacy.
- The AMA supports appropriate remuneration as a key component of the provincial virtual care strategy.
- The AMA acknowledges the challenges associated with the use of multiple non-integrated technology solutions and continues to advocate for integrated, streamlined solutions.

Data Analytics and Health System Use

- The AMA advocates for the transparency of processes and reports to help ensure physician confidence with respect to data interpretation and subsequent reporting.
- The AMA supports the concept of a provincial health data repository.
- The AMA recognizes the importance of physician representation in design, prioritization and governance structures.
- The AMA realizes the criticality of data literacy as it relates to the secondary use of data and advocates for resources to support increased awareness and guidance in the use of health data for clinical practice improvement.
- The AMA supports the streamlined and standardized provision of data and reports to facilitate interpretation and effective use.
- The AMA recognizes the importance of health care research in improving the health system and supports the sharing of data for research purposes.
- The AMA will preferentially support data analytics and reporting processes that integrate with the physicians' maintenance and development of competency through integration with MOC$^®$ and Mainpro$^®$ programs.

To provide feedback, email president@albertadoctors.org.