

APPLICATION SERVICE PROVIDER (ASP) INFORMATION SHEET

Early implementations of EMRs across Canada have provided several key lessons. Physicians maintaining a locally-hosted EMR on a server in their office can end up spending inordinate amounts of time supporting the technology taking valuable time away from the practice of providing patient care. As a result of this issue and others, PITO-qualified Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems use an Application Service Provider (ASP) model.

An ASP is a company that hosts a client's information system on its computer servers so the client does not have to manage the computer servers and other related technologies themselves. ASP-hosted EMRs are set up in common data centres and each physician practice has its own secured patient database. Physicians access their PITO-qualified EMR over the Private Physician Network (PPN), a secure, private network designed specifically for physicians and provided by the BC Ministry of Health at no additional cost to the physician.

In an ASP model, the physician continues to look after the patient records as the custodian of the record. The physician enters into a contract with the EMR vendor to store the records on the physician's behalf, similar to what physicians do today with companies who maintain their old paper records off site to save space in the office. The ASP model is in common practice today in healthcare as well as other industries, and has been reviewed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and Office of the Information Privacy Commissioner.

Advantages of the ASP model include:

- ASP providers handle security, data back-up, file management, integration, and software updates more reliably and less expensively than a physician's office can, **freeing up time and money** for the physician.
- Use of an ASP solution **enhances the security** of patient records. Computer servers which store patients' records are kept in a highly secure data centre with 24/7 security monitoring including sophisticated intrusion detection and prevention.
- **Secure access** from the hospital, a physician's home and elsewhere can be **achieved more reliably** than from a locally-hosted EMR.
- Physicians experienced with EMRs consistently emphasize the importance of **integration of external data** (lab, radiology, pharmacy, etc.), which is more easily achieved through an ASP model than when EMRs are stored separately in each physician office.

Advantages of the PPN include:

- The quality of network service – the **speed and reliability exceed** that of standard Internet Service Providers (ISP) services currently used in most physician offices to access the Internet.
- The PPN has a **redundant architecture**. This solution will allow physicians to continue seeing patients with access to their most important data in almost any situation.
- The PPN is a **separate network from the Internet**. When access must occur from outside the physician's office via the public Internet, for example when a physician is accessing their EMR from home, a secure encrypted Virtual Private Network connection is established over the Internet to connect the physician to their EMR.