

November 23, 2005  
2005/nr-113

## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT PROTECTING PATIENTS FROM HARMFUL DRUG REACTIONS**

*New Health Care Technology Will Help Save Lives*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is helping prevent harmful drug reactions with the launch of a project that gives hospital emergency departments electronic access to some patients' prescription drug histories, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“This initiative is going to save lives,” said Smitherman. “It will benefit more than two million Ontarians, including seniors. Doctors and nurses will have the information they need to quickly identify potentially harmful drug reactions and deliver better care in emergency situations.”

Last month, the government began providing some hospital emergency departments with real-time access to the prescription drug claims history of patients receiving benefits through two provincial drug programs. These programs are the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, which covers seniors, recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program, and people on social assistance; and the Trillium Drug Program, which helps people who have high drug costs compared to their income.

The government is moving towards full implementation of the project by summer 2006.

The government is collaborating on the start of this new \$10 million system with Canada Health Infoway, an independent not-for-profit corporation that supports the development of electronic health information systems across the country.

“Our organization is committed to providing health care providers with timely and secure electronic access to patient health information,” said Richard Alvarez, Canada Health Infoway's President and CEO. “We're pleased to be supporting the Ontario government on this new initiative that will enhance the care people receive in hospital emergency departments.”

Personal health information will continue to be private and confidential. Patients will have the right to prevent their prescription history from being disclosed to hospitals, at all times and for any reason.

“This is a significant step towards setting up an electronic health record for all Ontarians,” said Smitherman. “In 2006, we'll begin to provide lab requests and patient results electronically to give our health care providers more and faster access to the lab information they need to deliver better patient care.”

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times, and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

For further information:

Members of the media:

David Spencer  
Minister's Office  
416-327-4320

David Jensen  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 416-327-4327, or 1-800-268-1154

Cindy Hoffman  
Canada Health Infoway  
514-397-7335 or 1-866-868-0550  
choffman@infoway-inforoute.ca

Version française disponible

Att: Backgrounder