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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **PHARMANET EXPANDED THROUGHOUT B.C. HOSPITALS**

VICTORIA – Patient care and safety will be improved by making medication histories available to all authorized health professionals in hospitals and designated mental health facilities through access to PharmaNet, announced Health Minister George Abbott.

PharmaNet is an internationally recognized secure electronic network in British Columbia. It protects patients from potentially dangerous medication errors, duplications and dangerous combinations of different medications by linking prescriptions to a central database.

“By expanding PharmaNet’s access throughout hospitals, we can further reduce potential duplications and avoid potentially dangerous drug interactions,” said Abbott. “With the most relevant and accurate patient information at their fingertips, health professionals can make the best possible decisions about patient treatment.”

Expansion of access to hospitals and designated mental health facilities of PharmaNet is supported by amendments to the Access to PharmaNet Patient Record Information Regulation. The amendments will be implemented early in 2007 after the necessary processes and procedures are in place, including patient privacy and legal considerations.

Expansion of PharmaNet access to hospitals through health authorities throughout the province is supported by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

“A physician cannot always rely on a patient's memory for an accurate medication history. PharmaNet is the tool that physicians can use to instantly verify a patient's medication history,” said Dr. Heidi Oetter, deputy registrar for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC. “Connecting hospital doctors to PharmaNet will help improve the quality of care and assist doctors to make more informed drug treatment decisions.”

“This is wonderful news for all health-care providers, patients and families in the province of British Columbia. Authorized access to a patient’s outpatient medication record, using the PharmaNet system, will support safer and more efficient care,” said Dr. Mary-Lyn Fyfe, medical director of Clinical Informatics and Telehealth for the Vancouver Island Health Authority. “Having the right information at the right time is invaluable to physicians, nurses and pharmacists in making the right decisions regarding patient treatment.”

PharmaNet’s strict privacy measures remain in place, with all accesses to patients’ information logged, and all authorized users individually identified. PharmaNet will continue to comply with the Province’s Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

“PharmaNet actually improves patient privacy protection when compared to paper records,” added Abbott. “As part of our comprehensive eHealth strategy, we have tight restrictions around accessing the information – every time that someone accesses the information, they leave an electronic footprint.”

The PharmaNet data expansion is a part of the ministry’s eHealth strategy. This comprehensive set of initiatives and investments will include significant advancements in PharmaNet’s capabilities, in supporting pharmacists, and physicians in community settings as well as hospitals, and eventually enabling citizens to access to their own health records.

PharmaNet currently links most emergency departments in B.C., all community pharmacies, many hospital pharmacies, and many medical practices, to a central database. Earlier this year, PharmaNet was expanded to medical practices.

Media contact: Marisa Adair  
Communications Director  
Ministry of Health  
250 920-8500  
250 952-1887 (media line)

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