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MAXIMUS®

Managing Drug Information for Patient Safety in British Columbia

The Issue – Since April 2005, MAXIMUS has been operating and maintaining PharmaNet, the Province of British Columbia’s system for drug information and claims adjudication and payment, under the PharmaCare program. PharmaCare is a provincial-run program that helps eligible B.C. residents with the expense of eligible prescription drugs and designated medical supplies.

The PharmaCare program needed a secure, high-availability health service network to connect 2,100 provincial community pharmacies, emergency rooms, and medical practices to the PharmaNet Drug Information System (DIS), which provides coverage and drug use evaluation information and processes over 54 million prescriptions annually.

The Ministry of Health Services (MOHS) wanted to modernize and improve the administration of PharmaCare. Previous processes were largely paper-based, despite a large increase in B.C.’s population and vastly increased expectations for service. The MOHS sought a provider with 21st century technology and business practices to re-engineer their outdated system. After an intensive year-long procurement process, MAXIMUS was selected to provide program management and information technology services.



The Challenge – The PharmaNet DIS network needed to be developed to help protect patients from medication errors and adverse reactions, while also ensuring that the protection of patient information met privacy and security measures that are the strictest in Canada. The system would also need to meet or exceed the national standards for drug information services established by the Canada Health Infoway under the pan-Canadian “eDrug” mission and vision.

The overall goal was to improve customer service, promote efficiency, and inject capital investment into PharmaCare’s technology infrastructure. Service levels had to be developed and implemented that ensured that the client and the public saw significant value for their investment.

The Solution – MAXIMUS’ demonstrated expertise with PharmaNet operations and maintenance involving technical support and operation of the PharmaNet Help Desk, which regularly fields 1,000 calls a day from patients and health care professionals, led the MOHS to select MAXIMUS to build and deploy the network that would provide access to the DIS. Together with MOHS and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia, MAXIMUS gained insight into the business functions supported by the DIS and consulted with health professionals and the public to improve prescription dispensing and enhance service and safety to patients and pharmacists.

“As the arm of the Ministry of Health that manages the MSA with MAXIMUS, the Business Management Office has seen firsthand the success of this outsourcing decision. The Ministry is extremely pleased with the successes now being consistently achieved in delivering on service level commitments. This speaks well of MAXIMUS, it reflects well on the Ministry of Health and on government’s commitment to outsourcing generally, and — most importantly — it benefits the citizens and health care providers in B.C.”

– Carolyn Bell, Executive Contract Manager, *Master Services Agreement for HIBC*

MAXIMUS designed and installed a highly secure network within PharmaNet that now connects the DIS with British Columbia’s pharmacists to provide up-to-the-minute information and tools to monitor the health aspects of medication orders, enabling safer medication dispensing and decision-making for every prescription processed. More specifically, through this new access, the DIS is able to perform critical automated screening for drug utilization in the areas of:

- drug-to-drug interactions.
- drug-to-prior drug adverse reactions.
- dosage range checks.

The DIS provides inquiry and update access to relevant patient-related information. With the results of the Drug Utilization Evaluation (DUE) automated screenings, including an associated severity level and advisory message, and related patient and other information in hand, the pharmacist can identify—and protect the patient from—accidental medication duplication, harmful drug interactions, or dosage errors. The system also supports dispensing, changing, or refusing to fill the prescription, plus detection and prevention of prescription fraud.

The DIS now also supports the efforts of the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia and provides patients with access to vital information.

The Outcome – PharmaNet’s DIS now supports British Columbia’s patients, practitioners, and pharmacy professionals with more effective delivery of health service operations. In 2008, over 54 million prescriptions were dispensed using the PharmaNet DIS and the system flagged more than 29 million potential drug interactions (an increase of more than 5 million over 2007).

MAXIMUS’ expertise in managing, maintaining, and enhancing PharmaNet, together with an understanding of the business functions supported by the system, earned MAXIMUS the contract to modernize PharmaNet and build its replacement. This next-generation drug information system will provide for more comprehensive and securely accessible prescription medication profiles and other online tools to support pharmacists, physicians, and their patients, laying the foundation for ePrescribing.

PharmaNet’s overall success is a reflection of MAXIMUS’ commitment to service delivery in helping the Province of British Columbia meet the growing and changing needs of its citizens and stakeholders for years to come.

To learn how MAXIMUS can help with the design and development of a highly secure medical network, contact Brian Albert at 530.304.1555, or email health@maximus.com.



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