

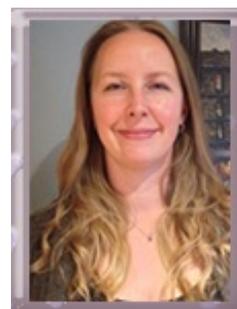
Access 2022: Setting New Goals for Digital Health in Canada

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Trends and Issues in Nursing Informatics Column

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Melanie Neumeier is an Assistant Professor in the BScN Program at MacEwan University in Edmonton, AB. Her research interests include integrating new technologies into nursing education and interdisciplinary collaboration in enhancing evidence-informed nursing practice. Melanie first became interested in nursing informatics through a nursing informatics course she took in her MN program at Memorial University in Newfoundland, and has since continued that interest in her research, her writing, and her teaching.



COLUMN



Canada Health Infoway has been a champion for digital health access for all Canadians since its inception in 2001. As a government funded not-for-profit organization, Infoway works with Canadians, academics and a variety of health care organizations across the country to transform the delivery of health care in Canada. While huge strides have been made towards a digitally integrated system, Canada remains behind peer countries in access to care and digitally-enabled services (Infoway, 2019). In the 2017 Commonwealth Fund

ranking of health care system performance, Canada ranked ninth out of eleven countries overall and was last in terms of access to care like same-day physician appointments and emergency department wait times (Green, 2018). This shows that while technology is advancing its application in health care is not keeping up.

Canadians are asking for improved online health care access so that they can fill a prescription or check their health records as easily as they do their banking and their shopping. In the 2016 Infoway survey *Connecting Patients for Better Health*, Canadians reported that digital health improves their knowledge of their health (77 per cent), improves their confidence in self-management of their health (69 per cent) and supports more informed discussions with their doctor (74 per cent). However, despite the identified

benefits only 22 per cent of Canadians surveyed had access to their health information online, and 73 per cent of those who did not, wanted it. Canadians identified their digital health priorities as being able to view and request prescriptions electronically, access medical records, immunization records and laboratory tests electronically, and be able to e-book appointments and have e-consultations with their doctors. Canadians have told us what they need, but unfortunately access to many of these services is still limited (Safarov, 2019).

In response to these needs, Infoway has launched ACCESS 2022 which is a movement to promote a future where all Canadians have access to their health information through the availability and use of digital health tools and services. ACCESS 2022 is focusing on two strategic initiatives: ACCESS Health and PrescribeIT™. These initiatives were chosen due to their national scope and the positive impact they can have for Canadians (Infoway, 2019).

PrescribeIT™ is a national e-prescribing service that enables prescribers to electronically transmit a prescription to a patient's pharmacy of choice. This supports safe medication management and is more convenient for patients who no longer have to worry about losing or forgetting paper prescriptions. ACCESS 2022 goals are to have PrescribeIT™ available to all community prescribers and community pharmacies across the country. National programs like PrescribeIT™ have the potential to increase the interoperability of health information by getting everyone working from the same system.

Infoway's ACCESS Health program is focused on providing more Canadians with access to their personal health information and to digitally-enabled health services anytime, anywhere, from any device. This helps meet the priorities as identified by Canadians and allows health care providers to really partner with their patients to promote informed decision-making, better access, and greater ability for self-management.

The ACCESS 2022 movement has already started with the enhancement of e-mental health services like crisis text lines and mental health apps to improve digital access to mental health services and will hopefully build momentum as programs are implemented across the country helping bring Canada back up to par with international health care standards.

References

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