



Dear Island Division Executive Directors,

The physicians in the Victoria and South Island Divisions, in partnership with Island Health, have been hard at work improving communication with acute care providers, and we want to share our progress with you. With the support of the Shared Care Committee, the **Patient Summaries Project** enables family physicians to provide longitudinal health information early in an inpatient stay.

We hope that you will share this information with your physician members through whatever means you feel is best. For your convenience, we have created a short memo that could be included in e-newsletters or a direct email to members. As well, a copy of this letter is posted on the Victoria Division website [here](#) if you would like to direct members to it through your communications.

If physicians in your community are interested in starting to send patient summaries in to support patient admissions or potential admissions, the Transitions in Care Committee would welcome any questions or requests for additional information. You can reach us through our Project Manager, Kristin Atwood, at katwood@divisionsbc.ca.

Family physicians hold valuable information that acute care providers may not possibly be aware of. Patient summaries provide hospital clinicians with important details about the patient's care and health status. Hospitalists in Victoria have used the summaries to identify previous conditions that could affect the current course of treatment; discover drug allergies that had not been recorded in PharmaNet; and understand the patient's cognitive and functional baselines without having to duplicate tests, for example. By knowing a patient's family and social history, discharge planning can account for living conditions; social supports; and goals of care. In creating and submitting a patient summary, family physicians help ensure their patients' needs are being met through an effective communication flow.

The Victoria and South Island Divisions Transitions in Care Committee has strengthened this communication in several ways:

- Secured a central fax number, where patient summaries can be faxed and scanned into PowerChart under "Primary Care Provider Patient Summary"
- Developed the ability to send summaries in proactively for high-risk patients or patients referred to the Emergency Department, without the need for an admission record – *you can send a summary in for any patient that you feel may be at risk for hospitalization*
- Initiated the creation of easy-to-download, standardized, EMR-specific patient summary templates, helping to promote consistency and improve efficiencies

We have been delighted to see that, through word of mouth, the process for faxing patient summaries has spread to our colleagues in the Central and North Island regions. If physicians in your area are already sending in summaries or are interested in starting this new workflow, we wanted you to know that we are actively working on EMR-specific templates that will make it easier for family physicians to create a summary quickly and effectively. More information about our templates can be found at: <https://www.divisionsbc.ca/victoria/our-impact/transitions-in-care/patient-summaries-pilot>



As well, we wanted to let you know that Island Health has developed a new web tool called EMR Connect. This new tool will save time as it will enable family physician offices to upload their patient summaries directly into PowerChart making them quickly accessible within acute care facilities. EMR Connect is currently rolling out in clinics in the Greater Victoria area and Island Health wishes to spread the tool throughout Vancouver Island over the coming months. While the process of creating the summary is the same regardless of whether fax or the web tool is used, there is some training involved with the web portal. You will be hearing more about EMR Connect through Island Health communications, or, if you would like Island Health to visit your office or to find out more, you can contact Francis Harrison by phone at 1-250-519-7700 ext. 12216 or email at EMRConnectFeedback@viha.ca.

Health communications technology changes quickly. Our approach to enabling family physicians to contribute information to support inpatient care has changed as new solutions became available, moving from fax in the first phase to the web portal that we are transitioning to now. As the tools required to make different electronic systems inter-operable are developed, better solutions will become available, allowing two-way electronic information exchange. We know that both the fax-and-scan and the EMR Connect web portal are interim steps toward a more fulsome interoperability solution. Having access to these tools means you don't have to wait to contribute to your patient's acute care by sharing your knowledge with hospital clinicians until some future state is achieved, but it also means that things will change again in the future. Transitions in Care will be happy to share our knowledge as new solutions develop.

We are working closely with the Provincial Digital Health Strategy and are sharing and aligning our work with the future vision of fully electronic transmission of patient information. We are excited to say that the Patient Summary Project is a building block towards this goal. The better we can make this work, the better the final digital solution will be.

This is truly an exciting development for us and we are thrilled to be sharing it with you. We thank you for your time and welcome your thoughts and questions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Laura Phillips and **Dr. Lisa Veres**, Co-Leads, Victoria & South Island Division Transitions in Care Committee

Bindy Bains, Director, Health Information Management, Island Health