



Ontario Telemedicine Network: *Making the Connection for Health*

What is OTN?

The Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) is the result of the April 2006 merger of three award-winning provincially-funded telemedicine networks: CareConnect in Eastern Ontario, NORTH Network in Central and Northern Ontario, and VideoCare in Southwestern Ontario.

Telemedicine (or telehealth; the terms are often used interchangeably) refers to the use of information and communication technologies to support the delivery of clinical care, professional education and health-related administrative services.

In 2005/06, telemedicine services provided by Ontario's three provincial telemedicine networks facilitated the delivery of care in more than 23,000 patient consultations across the province, as well as educational opportunities for thousands of health professionals.

The commitment and innovation of OTN's partner organizations and the health care professionals of Ontario have made the province a world leader in the field of telemedicine, and provided a strong foundation on which to build. Today, by operating as one network, OTN's capacity to plan, establish and support province-wide services is significantly increased.

The evolution of OTN

The initial service delivery available through OTN's legacy Networks was accelerated through funding by Health Canada's Canadian Health Infrastructure Partnerships Program (CHIPP), which allowed for significant expansion of the application of telemedicine across the province beginning in 2001. Owing to the successful implementation of the CHIPP grants, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care ("the Ministry") began providing operational funding to the legacy Networks in 2003.

In 2005, the Ministry supported a merger of the three telemedicine networks to form a provincial telemedicine solution based on best practices and a customer-centric focus. By leveraging the networks' successes, assets and resources, the Ministry ensured that telemedicine would continue to grow and satisfy demand for services.

Canada Health Infoway and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to support OTN's integration, while the Ministry provides OTN's annual operating funding.

OTN is further supported through its relationships with the Government of Ontario's Smart Systems for Health Agency (SSHA), which provides a province-wide electronic health infrastructure, and with the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Telehealth Program (KOTH), an independent First Nations telehealth provider.

Governance and Management

A Board of Directors and an independent Chair govern the Ontario Telemedicine Network. Board members are representative of all regions of the province and of the continuing care and education sectors. A member-at-large provides additional expertise. Non-voting members include the CEO of OTN and a Ministry representative.

Input from regional stakeholders – hospital members and partners, clinical program leaders and provider agencies – further informs the expansion and evolution of telemedicine in Ontario.

Dr. Ed Brown leads the Executive Management Team. He is assisted by a Chief Medical Officer, Chief Information Officer and three Vice Presidents with regional and corporate responsibilities.

The Future

OTN's goal is the seamless integration of telemedicine into the provincial health care system. Working collaboratively with its partners, OTN will make it possible to enhance and expand services traditionally provided in hospitals and to connect with organizations and sectors across the continuum of care.

By the end of 2006, OTN will have offered telemedicine solutions to every hospital in the province and will have expanded activities to other sectors such as public health, long-term care and community care. A new technical architecture will ensure complete integration and interoperability to further support province-wide initiatives.

OTN will continue its efforts to support timely access to specialists and emergency care, enhance educational opportunities for health professionals and make quality health care available to patients and their families across the province.
