

Pilot launched for Quebec's provincial EHR system



QUEBEC CITY – The province of Quebec has officially started its \$560 million Dossier de santé électronique project, an electronic health record network that will allow 95,000 doctors, nurses and allied healthcare professionals to access the medical charts of their patients using a single viewing system.

The project kicked-off in May with a pilot system at a clinic in Quebec City and will roll out across the province over the next

three years.

“It’s the first time in Quebec that we’ll have a complete, longitudinal view of the patient’s medical history,” commented Dr. Guy Bisson (pictured), senior clinical advisor to the Dossier’s project director, and a former professor of medicine at the University of Sherbrooke.

Dr. Bisson is now medical lead for xwave, which won the contract as systems integrator and project leader of Quebec’s Dossier.

Dr. Bisson explained that the Dossier de santé électronique du Québec (DSQ) project intends to integrate existing sources of data – initially from labs, pharmacies and the provincial drug plan, and diagnostic labs – making the records available to authorized care-givers through a web-based portal.

It’s a huge integration project, and one that involves many first-of-its-kind technologies and approaches.

“This project is a milestone for Canada, as Quebec will be the first to implement the Infoway architectural blueprint on a large scale,” commented Gary Folker, managing director, business development, at xwave’s healthcare division. “It’s also the first provincial project to use HL7 v3 messaging,” he added, referring to the leading-edge standard for communicating health data files.

For its part, Xwave stands to earn \$111 million as the systems integrator and project manager. Its partners include Orion Health, which is supplying the viewer software for the system; Oracle, whose Healthcare Transaction Base (HTB) will be used for the first time in Canada in a large-scale project; and Bell Canada, which is providing infrastructure management and training.

Dr. Bisson noted that Quebec has a unique legal environment that requires the provincial health-record system to be created in a way that’s different from other jurisdictions in Canada.

“In Quebec, you need explicit consent of the patient to share information electronically,” he said.

As well, the data itself must be stored locally in one of 18 regions across the province. For that reason, the Dossier project is building 18 different repositories – information from various sources will be uploaded into these repositories on an ongoing basis. For example, information from 126 labs across the province will flow into the appropriate regional repository.

Nadeem Ahmad, xwave’s managing director of healthcare, said the Quebec project is likely the most complex provincial system to be launched in Canada. “It’s complex not only in terms of size, but also because of the special legal environment, the differing languages, and the challenges of integrating a diverse infrastructure.”