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# E-CLAIMS SUCCESS STORIES: NECST AMONG THE FIRST TO COMPLETE THE HL7 VERSION 3

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In the last column, we spoke about the need for health information standards and CIHI's intention of contributing to the development and implementation of such standards. We believe, the development of a national standard would lead to more consistent data capture, and allow a foundation for claims information exchange throughout the healthcare industry.

As a follow-up to that story, we want to share the recent success of one of these initiatives and to present a concrete example of how health service providers are beginning to collaborate in discussions on the benefits of automating aspects of their information management systems.

The NeCST (National e-Claims Standard) project was born in April 2000, when CIHI was approached by a number of healthcare providers (Canadian Pharmacists Association, Association for Claims Exchange and B.C. Ministry of Health) to assist in addressing key health delivery issues related to governance and funding. We were asked to facilitate and manage a project to address these issues.

The NeCST is designed to apply within a wide range of health care transactions, by expanding on existing standards and broadening their functionality to other providers. It can give core encounter information to the electronic health record and to knowledge-based administration and decision-making activities, while at the same time afford various benefits to the healthcare system. The NeCST data standards development offers:

- reduced costs of managing health billing data;
- reduced costs of processing health claims and payments;
- reduced paper costs and costs of document handling;
- reduced number of refused and partially paid claims; and
- faster access to claim status.

Lately, interest in finding a way to integrate all the information relating to the delivery of healthcare, to a patient over his or her lifetime, has increased. The NeCST has become one of the first projects in the world to complete the Health Level Seven (HL7) version 3-membership ballot, which will help in creating consistent national standards for billing, vocabulary and settlement.

HL7 has become the standard for the electronic exchange of clinical and administrative data in North American health services. It has been widely implemented across Canada and the United States because it enables information exchange between computer applications developed by different and often competing vendors. As hospitals have gradually expanded information management operations, a need to share critical information across the systems has emerged.

NeCST's success as an accepted standard is further highlighted by the work of BCE Emergis. Working in conjunction with chiropractic and physiotherapy healthcare providers, BCE are the initial implementers of a sub-set of NeCST messages for chiropractic and physiotherapy claims for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario. This represents the first HL7 v3 implementation in Canada.

One of the key funding organizations and supporters of the NeCST project has been, and will continue to be, Canada Health Infoway. The federal, provincial and territorial governments founded Infoway in order to further the development of health information technological initiatives across the country. In partnership with the private sector, governments and the healthcare community, Canada Health Infoway provides a framework for development and adoption of solutions leading to better healthcare. Their role in the creation of the NeCST has helped to further the creation of electronic health records; a tool that will play a crucial role in a modern, patient-focused healthcare system.

CIHI is proud to be able to contribute to the development of tools that will be invaluable in tomorrow's Canadian health system.

