



- SERGE J. TAILLON, CIHI COLUMNIST -

## INFORMATION STORAGE: KEEPING IT SAFE - YET AVAILABLE

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[www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)

**A**t CIHI data is our business. We collect it, we analyze it, we publish it and yes, we even talk about it. When information is your main concern you need some way to protect your raw material from any sort of degradation or damage. Our clients expect a certain level of service and we aim to provide it. The question remains however: how do you protect something you cannot see? How do you prevent the bogging down of your day-to-day operational systems while still maintaining a database of past results, trends and estimates? The answer lies where it usually does, within the Information Systems Branch and their expertise in systems management.

The underlying concept is really quite simple. Just like a warehouse for goods, think of a warehouse for data. Such a warehouse stores and protects that which is not needed at the moment. In this particular case the goods are intangible, but that's really where most of the difference lies.

Data Warehousing has been defined simply as managed data situated outside the operational systems. Basically, it evolved from the recognition that storing large amounts of data would eventually compromise the operational system. With the world getting faster and faster, it doesn't take much to see why a bulky system burdened with the load of an organization's historical files would not be ideal.

The ultimate goal of any system is to make it easy for the end-user to access information he/she needs. At CIHI, the Information Systems team is making it a priority to provide **appropriate access** to data via the Internet. A quick trip to the CIHI Web site ([www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)) reveals a groundbreaking new service internally known as QuickStats which allows a user to enter a few queries in order to find statistical tables he or she finds him/herself in need of. On an average day there are over 250 completed QuickStats queries on anonymous data tables that take approximately 1.8 seconds to complete. The Information Systems team has also provided a single sign on for registered authorized users to access new electronic reporting applications (including Coding Query, DAD and NAGRS abstracting manuals, e-CHAPS and DAD hospital-specific reports.) Over 1400 such users have registered for this privacy secured service, with the average client accessing more than two applications.

At CIHI, we are working toward a vision of comprehensive health information provided in order to improve understanding in support of good health decisions. At the moment, we are working toward a Web offering allowing statistical information to be accessed by hospitals and health authorities. We are committed to improving our health system through better health information. I encourage you to check out the CIHI Web site to learn more.



### Data Protection Rules

*Privacy: The need to consider the advantages of controlled access to health information by researchers while protecting individuals' right to privacy has become one of CIHI's most important mandates. We have dedicated ourselves to respecting personal privacy, safeguarding the confidentiality of health information, and providing a secure environment for information under our management. That is why CIHI has a widespread privacy program in place that includes strict policies and procedures.*