



USING INFORMATION GOVERNANCE TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY, REPORTING, AND PATIENT OUTCOMES

“The results from IGHealthRate™ not only provide us with a lens on areas that are lacking maturity, but also allow us to establish a balanced approach across competencies and fast track areas that are ready to take on IG improvements.”

Andrea Lorette, Lead, Information Governance and Information and Data Hub, Northern Health Authority



CHALLENGE

The Northern Health Authority, a Canadian healthcare provider, needed a unified, consistent approach to information governance (IG), to enhance overall efficiency, improve data quality, and facilitate regulatory compliance.



SOLUTION

The **IGHealthRate self-assessment tool** helped establish a baseline for IG performance and develop a roadmap for a centralized, standardized approach across all clinical and business areas.



RESULTS

Improving IG awareness and role clarity, Northern Health moved up a level of the Iron Mountain IG Adoption Model. Better data gathering has raised productivity and reporting for enhanced health delivery.



Higher quality data
for regulatory reporting



Efficiency gains
from improved data gathering



Reduced risk
from increased understanding of information governance



Greater potential for
storage rental and HR

TACKLING COMPLEXITY AT THE ROOT

“How you deliver healthcare, and how you create information and data, are closely linked. By helping clinical staff make that connection, IGHealthRate supports our move from paper records towards digital.”

Andrea Lorette, Lead, Information Governance and Information and Data Hub, Northern Health Authority

Bringing about change

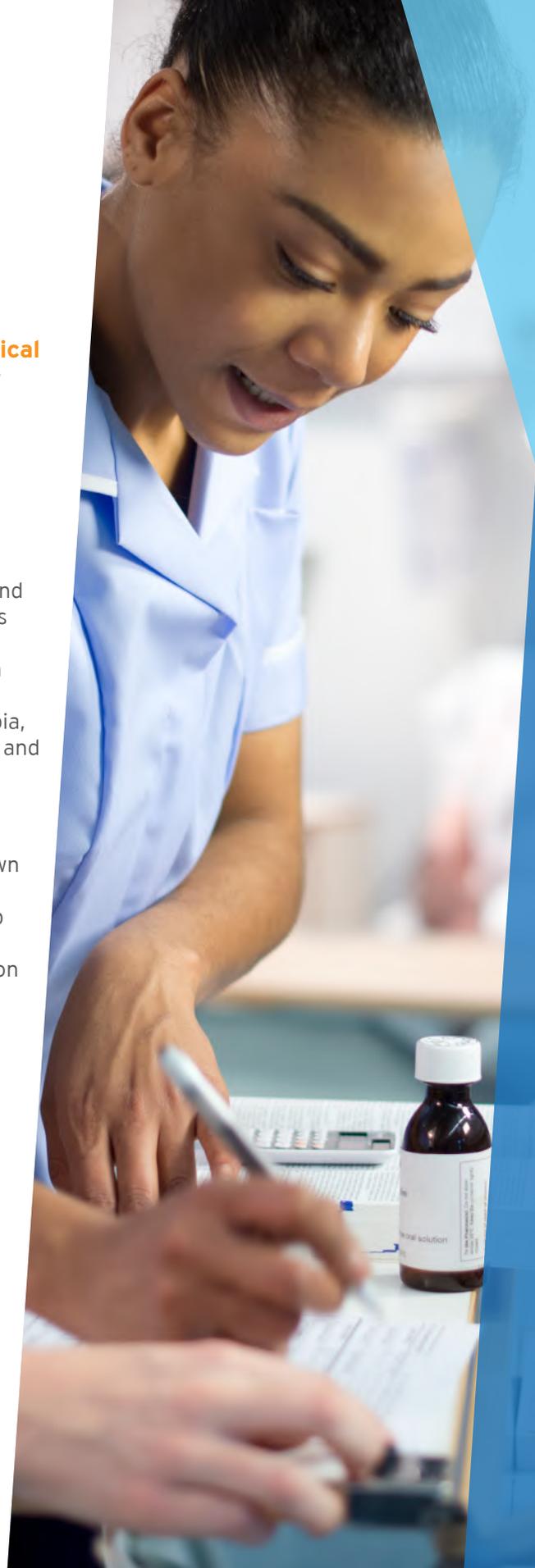
While the COVID-19 pandemic showed the world the need for—and value of—ready access to accurate and comprehensive data, this came as no surprise to healthcare professionals. And, as patient records and certain types of care delivery go digital, information governance (IG) is taking on ever greater importance. For the Northern Health Authority within the Province of British Columbia, Canada, the journey began with the need for a more centralized and standardized approach to information management.

Northern Health provides diverse care services to the northern half of British Columbia—a rural region the size of France. The organization is divided into three delivery areas, each with its own COO, while at the regional level VPs manage specific programs or support services such as HR and IT. “When the regional group makes decisions, it has to work with the three operational areas to implement change,” explains Andrea Lorette, Lead, Information Governance. “That can be a complex process.”

Consistency is key

Structural complexity made information management especially difficult. Historically, different health services were delivered independently with siloed information and data. Northern Health had been unifying those silos for some time. First, it introduced a regional clinical information system for its 24-plus hospitals. Then a similar system was deployed for primary and community care.

However, many of the people who created data had little understanding of **IG principles**. And the people who designed the systems often lacked knowledge of business definitions and clinical context. Local teams introduced variations into the regional systems, which compromised consistency and control. “People spent a lot of time just locating information,” says Lorette. “It was also harder to analyse data effectively to comply with regulatory reporting requirements.”



Alignment with national framework for information management lifecycle





SETTING THE AGENDA FOR INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

"IGHealthRate is a comprehensive tool without being overwhelming, so it's manageable even for people who don't have a good sense of what information governance is about."

Andrea Lorette, Lead, Information Governance and Information and Data Hub, Northern Health Authority

Assessing IG maturity

As a first priority, Northern Health wanted an audit to capture its IG status. Having researched available assessment tools, it selected IGHealthRate from Iron Mountain. Tailored to the healthcare sector, the solution also offered comprehensive and accessible functionality.

Key stakeholders were identified and introduced to IG concepts at a kick-off meeting. Using IGHealthRate, they participated in a workshop to evaluate 80+ categories from 10 different competencies, including IG structure and performance, legal and regulatory, privacy and security, analytics, IT and data governance, and strategic alignment.

Those evaluations were entered into IGHealthRate, which automatically processed the data and ranked Northern Health according to an IG Adoption Model (IGAM). This baseline was used to set goals and measure progress. Other outputs from the assessment included detailed observations on all competencies and recommendations for action.

Taking up the IG gauntlet

Following the initial self-assessment using the IGAM framework, which identified the need for enterprise-wide recognition of information as a strategic asset, Northern Health set up an Information Governance Oversight Committee chaired by the VP of Planning, Quality and Information Management.

One of its first tasks was to develop strategic objectives, including the requirement to revisit the maturity assessment. Committee members participated in the second study using the updated Iron Mountain IGHealthRate methodology. The workshop was facilitated by a consultant from Iron Mountain. "The fact that Iron Mountain had worked with a number of other organizations helped convey the usefulness of IGHealthRate and to recognize commonalities or potential pitfalls," Lorette recalls.

The assessment revealed the need for enterprise-wide recognition of information as a strategic asset. To that end, in March 2019 one of the Committee's first tasks was to develop strategic objectives. Members also participated in a second assessment in February 2020.



Senior executive engagement has been crucial to the program's success





BEST PRACTICE UNDERPINS ALL ACTIVITIES

“We adopted IG principles to engage stakeholders and enhance the management of COVID-19-related data across relevant care settings. Our work with IGHealthRate informed this approach and helped improve our responses during the pandemic.”

Andrea Lorette, Lead, Information Governance and Information and Data Hub, Northern Health Authority

Positive employee involvement

Both IGHealthRate assessments yielded many potential improvement areas, making it essential to prioritize. One early focus was on establishing data owners (who control particular data elements) and data stewards (who oversee data assets) in both clinical and business domains. Improvement is evident in their progression up a level from January 2019 to February 2020.

Increased IG awareness has matched greater confidence in the accessibility, transparency, reliability, quality, and integrity of information and data. Clinical teams, in particular, have more knowledge of IG principles and a better understanding of their responsibilities. All those roles are now documented, and discussions about information management are linked to data quality. “Staff are aware that improving data quality is how we can make the data usable for better analytics,” says Lorette.

Optimising COVID-19 response

Although the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the IG agenda, Northern Health was able to draw on its experience to cope with new demands that emerged during the crisis. Its hospitals needed to provide timely data sets on COVID-19 patients to the public health authority.

Lorette, seconded as Lead to the Information and Data Hub, used IG principles to quickly identify the relevant stakeholders and enlist their support as data owners and stewards. That, combined with an ad hoc request triage system, mitigated the effects of siloed analytics systems to give requesters more efficient access to information.

“We worked with our clinical teams to identify the governance roles and functions that would support our responses,” Lorette confirms. “This ensured a coordinated approach to COVID-19-related analytics.”





Ongoing clinical and business benefits

Those advances in analytics will feed into the wider IG program. Similarly, informal education work that began during the pandemic will develop fully after the emergency. There are plans to add data governance (DG) functions to job descriptions, identify the competencies that align to DG functions, and develop more consistent educational tools in line with recommendations from the second IGHealthRate assessment.

Looking ahead, data quality will continue to improve as IG best practice becomes embedded and a new information and data quality framework is completed. An IG roadmap, currently under development, will align activities and KPIs with the organization's strategic objectives and critical success factors. Centralized and standardized data management will reduce data gathering efforts and increase efficiency.

As Northern Health moves to digital patient records, physical storage costs will drop. And higher quality data will deliver cumulative benefits, enabling clinical and business staff to make better decisions with the ultimate goal of improving patient care.



Clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities



Increased ability to respond to changing requirements



Greater transparency of clinical and business information



Better-informed decision making and planning

EXPLORE OTHER WAYS
WE CAN HELP



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