

# Empowerment through eHealth

New technology empowers consumers to better manage their health and that of their loved ones



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**Imagine that you have recently visited your doctor and require the status of various tests. You turn on the television and begin surfing a highly secure online service where you can access, not only those tests results, but also your complete healthcare profile, updates and even guidance on potential health issues.**

This may be your reality in the not-too-distant future and it will be delivered through both existing and emerging eHealth tools. In fact, the recently launched TELUS health space sets the stage for such consumer-focused health services.

TELUS health space is powered by Microsoft HealthVault, a secure platform for the storage and delivery of personal medical information, and is the first Canadian online service of its kind. Devoted to consumer eHealth, it provides one of the most important pieces of the healthcare puzzle – access to information. Now, Canadians will have the ability to create, store and manage their personal health information across their computers, smartphones, and eventually, TVs. In addition, there will be a continuous integration of applications, medical devices, educational materials and so much more.

Although we are still at an early juncture in this progression to consumer eHealth, it is clear that the benefits are numerous.

First, it brings Canadians one step closer to a virtual healthcare scenario where patients no longer have to sit for hours in waiting rooms. This increases comfort and convenience, while reducing the burden on strained healthcare systems.

Secondly, it moves us further along a path to health record consolidation.

Today, a single person may have dozens of health records spread amongst their family doctor, local pharmacists, various specialists, their children's doctors and so on. We are now only a few years away from having these various records "talk to each other" and become part of a larger health profile, which will



empower Canadians to proactively manage their health and well-being.

The resulting big picture can ultimately create efficiencies and help prevent errors. For example, it can decrease the risk of adverse drug reactions for those with chronic diseases using over-the-counter products. It can act as a point of aggregation for those caring for aging parents or those with sick children. It will also allow patients to easily access their personal health

information, rather than trying to contact various healthcare professionals.

For instance, imagine the parents of a child with type 1 diabetes having their child's blood sugar levels automatically sent to them as a text message as soon as it has been tested. This is the kind of peace of mind that eHealth will deliver as consumers become more and more engaged.

## Role of privacy

The management of personal health information is undoubtedly a sensitive topic, where privacy is a fundamental requirement. Fortunately, advancements in data security have been made over the years in various industries, such as banking, where privacy needs have been crucial. As a result, technology has reached a point where eHealth services can be designed to store and manage health information that meet the strict security and privacy standards mandated by Canadian regulations.

TELUS health space is certainly a service of high security, and in fact, the first consumer solution to achieve Canada Health Infoway Certification. As such, consumers are enabled to share information, like lab results and medication profiles, to only those trusted individuals and care providers who have been exclusively granted consent.

Today, most consumers are still sitting on the sidelines of their own healthcare, but technology advancements are allowing them to get in the game and play a more active role.

In so many aspects of our lives, technology has empowered us with convenience, speed and access whether it is when paying bills online, changing a flight from our wireless device, or downloading music and movies to our phones. Should we not expect the same from our healthcare?

