The business case for transcription services in Saskatchewan
The Ministry of Health and 3sHealth, together with provincial healthcare leaders, are examining strategies to reduce medical service wait times, increase the quality of those services, and increase patient satisfaction. Importantly, achieving these goals will result in cost savings that will be redirected to patient care and creating long-term sustainability for the healthcare system. To examine and develop future-state strategies, 3sHealth and the provincial healthcare leaders are actively engaged in the transcription services business case development project.

Relationship to better care
Transcribed clinical documents form part of the patient’s health record, which provides:

- A communication and decision-making tool for providers;
- Information to support patient care treatment plans;
- A historical record of a patient’s medical care; and
- A source document from which health and service quality data is extracted for planning, evaluation and monitoring purposes.

Capturing transcription information as close to the care event as possible contributes to better care. The less time there is between the care event and the actual recording of that data, the more accurate and complete the information will be.

Today, variation exists in the healthcare system in terms of service delivery. In some health regions, Health Information Services provides transcription for core acute care services (like Operating Room reports and discharge summaries), Medical Imaging, Lab Services, mental health and therapy services. In other regions, transcription services are not provided by Health Information Services but by transcriptionists in stand-alone business units.

What’s more is that technological variation exists between regions/agencies in terms of how care events are dictated, transcribed, reviewed, approved and then distributed. Many out-of-date technologies are in use, processes and workflows are not standardized, and backlogs arise (which negatively impact patient care).

The Regional Health Authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, in collaboration with 3sHealth and healthcare sector leaders, are taking steps to enhance how transcription services are delivered in Saskatchewan.

By transforming how transcription services are delivered, patient care will be enhanced by:
• Improving turnaround times;
• Improving quality and accuracy of transcribed information; and
• Implementing other efficiencies (in terms of standards and workflows) that reduce costs.

The project team has been gathering input and data from stakeholder groups across the province’s health regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. The data is being used to inform a final business case report/recommendation.

3sHealth continues to exercise due diligence as all perspectives are heard and considered as we work collaboratively to enhance the provision of transcription services for the betterment of patients and families.

A vision for transcription services
On October 3, 2013, over 60 representatives from the health regions, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, healthcare sector unions, the Ministry of Health as well as vendors and patients attended a one-day workshop to discuss the current state of transcription services in Saskatchewan and create a vision statement for the future.
The participants represented a wide range of organizations and perspectives:

- Regional Health Authorities
- Saskatchewan Cancer Agency
- Ministry of Health
- eHealth Saskatchewan
- Radiology Associates of Regina
- Patient/family advisors
- SGEU
- Transcriptionists and records clerks
- Health Information Services managers

By the end of the collaborative session that involved group discussions, simulation exercises and presentations, participants created the following vision statement:

“Accurate and timely documentation globally accessible to patients and providers.”

**The future state for transcription services**

Saskatchewan healthcare is guided by the Patient First principle, which states that the value of our healthcare services is measured solely by the patient and the public we serve, and all our work and processes must be enacted in the service of improving the patient experience.

At the visioning day event, a patient-first approach was followed in the process of assessing where we as a healthcare system are today and where we want to be in the future. Participants agreed that the delivery of transcription services must:

- Ensure patient and staff safety;
- Be province-wide in nature (without regard to health region boundaries from the perspective of patients);
- Enable patient and provider access to accurate and timely information;
- Provide choice and flexibility;
- Ensure consistent and high-quality patient care; and
- Follow an integrated service delivery model.
How was the business case created?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision or future state</th>
<th>Business case detail</th>
<th>Recommendation and approvals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Stakeholders determined components of an ideal future state</td>
<td>- Potential options</td>
<td>- 3sHealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learned about best practices</td>
<td>- Data collection and validation</td>
<td>- RHA/SCA leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identified quick wins</td>
<td>- Analysis and review</td>
<td>- Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop implementation plans to create winning conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work in progress or completed

- The team visited each of the 12 RHAs and SCA and engaged in qualitative discussion with an objective to understand the current state of transcription services, including current state challenges, and to identify opportunities for improvement in the delivery of transcription services in the province. RHAs and SCA expressed support for the direction established at the visioning session on October 3.
Throughout October 2013, the team met with region staff to collect their perspectives on the current state of transcription services and their ideal vision for the future state. Health regions provided current state data which was used to formulate the future state recommendations.

Two quick win opportunities have been identified and are being pursued. The first is to move towards the standardization of templates and forms to be used for dictation and transcription. The team will begin implementing these quick win changes in one region, gradually expanding more broadly. The goal is to create a standard set of templates and make them available to all health regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. The Operations Committee will provide guidance on the initiative. The second quick win is to work with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) and other regions to determine how the significant results of a Rapid Process Improvement Workshop held at the SCA, related to improving the quality of dictation with authors, can be replicated across the system.

Various regions have volunteered to participate in both of these quick win opportunities. The results of the quick win trials will help to determine how a broader deployment could occur.

On January 8, 2014 members of the Lead and Operations Committees met to discuss the most recent version of the business case final report. The event was well attended, and participants engaged in productive group discussions. The feedback that was generated was used to enhance the report. On January 15 and again on January 23, the group re-convened to further discuss the report and make progress toward achieving support for a final recommendation.

Transcription services business case timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation and project kickoff sessions</td>
<td>August 7, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning and value stream mapping</td>
<td>October 3, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection and current state</td>
<td>November 29, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick wins</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report Q and A Review by Lead and Sponsor</td>
<td>December 16, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Report (SLT review)</td>
<td>December 19, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Final Report to Lead and Ops</td>
<td>December 31, 2013</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About 3sHealth and shared services

3sHealth, Saskatchewan’s healthcare shared services organization, was established in 2012 to provide province-wide services that better support a high-performing, sustainable, patient-centred healthcare system. Through shared services, economies of skill and scale can be leveraged to achieve standard work, establish best practices, and benefit from greater competition across the province.

The shared services model also enables decision-making at critical points throughout the process, as well as active participation and engagement from stakeholders and dedicated change management resources. Shared services can be delivered by existing structures, lead agencies (Regional Health Authorities, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (RHAs/SCA), 3sHealth), and other third parties.

3sHealth currently provides payroll, benefits administration, and joint purchasing services to the healthcare system. Its mandate is to identify and provide new shared service opportunities that will improve service quality and reduce costs to the healthcare system.

Visit [www.3shealth.ca](http://www.3shealth.ca)