

# Managing British Columbia's Pharmacy Claims Information System

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## The Issue

PharmaNet is the Province of British Columbia's drug information, claims adjudication and payment system that serves the PharmaCare program. PharmaCare is a provincially run program that helps eligible B.C. residents with the expense of prescription drugs and designated medical supplies.

All pharmaceutical dispenses performed in B.C. community pharmacies are conducted using PharmaNet, thereby creating a single database containing the medication history for all B.C. residents regardless of what physician created the prescription or what pharmacy filled it. Pharmacists use the point of service system in their pharmacy, which is connected to PharmaNet, to perform a real-time Drug Utilization Review (DUR) for every medication dispense. PharmaNet provides authorized pharmacists with up-to-the-minute information enabling appropriate medication dispensing decision-making. The automated DUR results include warnings with an associated severity level, advisory messages, and related patient and drug information. In 2014 alone, more than 47.6 million potential drug interactions were identified.

PharmaNet also provides inquiry and update access to relevant patient-related information such as medication and clinical history and patient demographic information.

The Province of B.C. sought to modernize the PharmaNet system and improve the administration of PharmaCare to meet a large increase in British Columbia's population and increased expectations for service. After an intensive year-long procurement process, MAXIMUS was selected to provide program management and information technology services.

## The Challenge

PharmaNet is a mission critical, large-scale, complex and secure electronic network that connects 1,232 pharmacies, 104 emergency rooms, 1,772 medical practices and 326 other health care facilities to a central database — providing patient coverage and drug use evaluation information, and processing more than 67.7 million prescription dispenses and their associated claims annually — supporting more than 4.2 million British Columbians. Today, more than \$938 million is paid out for prescriptions and other PharmaCare-covered benefits each year. Any disruption to the system would have significant impacts to the healthcare of millions of citizens.

## The Solution

Since April 2005, MAXIMUS Canada's Health Insurance BC (HIBC) project has been successfully operating, maintaining and enhancing PharmaNet. This demonstrated expertise in managing, maintaining and enhancing PharmaNet, together with the understanding of the business functions supported by the system that MAXIMUS has acquired, earned MAXIMUS the contract to modernize the PharmaNet system.

The objective of the modernization program was to upgrade PharmaNet to enable electronic prescribing such that physicians could enter a prescription in PharmaNet via the electronic medical record system in their practice and receive a real-time drug utilization review. Patients would

then be able to proceed to their community pharmacy where the pharmacist would retrieve the electronic prescription and dispense the medication, thereby creating an end-to-end record of the prescription and the associated medication provisioning. Additionally, the client sought the ability for pharmacists to perform, and bill for, medication review services. This in turn would encourage pharmacists to regularly review the complete medication profile for their patients.

In order to achieve this capability, PharmaNet was modernized with new transactions to support ePrescribing and medication reviews. The entire infrastructure of the system — including servers, operating systems, storage, network and more — was replaced with new, more scalable infrastructure capable of supporting the estimated 100 percent increase in projected transaction volume.

Along with this, MAXIMUS administers several other plans supported by the PharmaNet system. Enhancements to PharmaNet functionality were developed to incorporate PharmaCare policy changes such as:

- System changes necessary to support the amendment to the Retroactive Payments Process
- Multiple Source Generic Payments Policy
- Adaptation Fees — Monthly Payments Process
- Smoking Cessation — helping residents of B.C. with the cost of smoking cessation prescription drugs or nicotine replacement therapy products
- PharmaCare claims limits, including the annual Blood Glucose Test Strip quantity limit
- Frequency of Dispensing — limiting the dispensing fees that PharmaCare will cover in a given period

HIBC also provides support of PharmaNet, which includes provisioning of PharmaNet program information, conformance testing of Pharmacy point of service systems, and technical support. This includes the operation of the PharmaNet Help Desk 24x7x365, which regularly receives more than 1300 calls a day from patients and health care professionals.

## The Outcome

The final release of the PharmaNet Modernization project went live in July 2013 on schedule and on budget. PharmaNet is a 24x7x365, mission critical, clinic health care delivery system that health care providers across the province depend on to deliver health care services to citizens. This success in maintaining and upgrading this system demonstrates the MAXIMUS commitment to service delivery, to help the Province of British Columbia meet the growing and changing needs of its citizens and stakeholders for years to come.

**“I want to acknowledge the tremendous accomplishment that was achieved by MAXIMUS with respect to the successful roll-over of PharmaNet. I understand your team was exceptional, going above and beyond to make sure things ran smoothly. This effort clearly paid off — as you exceeded even your most optimistic projections for the outage. Congratulations — and thank you for doing such an excellent job.”**

— Lindsay Kislock, Assistant Deputy Minister  
BC Ministry of Health

To learn how MAXIMUS can help with your pharmacy claims information system, contact [canada@maximus.com](mailto:canada@maximus.com).



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