

## A doctor gets real about CST



Dr. Charles Lo is an anesthesiologist at St. Paul's and Mount St. Joseph hospitals, and an associate chief medical information officer with CST

Dr. Charles Lo became an anesthesiologist for a simple reason: to improve all kinds of patients' lives. It's a broad specialty, he says, exposing its practitioners to nearly every aspect of health and medical issues and allowing them to care for everyone, from newborns to the elderly.

"A lot of patients who come in for surgery, whether it's emergency or elective, are under a lot of stress and emotionally it's a very difficult time," he says. "Whatever we can do to guide them in that process to alleviate some of that anxiety is very important for us."

When asked why physicians should care about the Clinical and Systems Transformation (CST) project, Charles' answer is equally simple: better access to patient data.

"I think for a long time, we, in our institutions, have been practicing in an environment where we haven't had good access to our patient data. What the project promises for us is the opportunity to collect meaningful and high quality data, and I think that is really the next frontier in terms of health care improvement."

### Making a difference

Charles says not having such data impairs physicians' ability to make improvements to their own practices, as well as their departments and specialty areas. It can also be hard for them to participate in meaningful research, as well as quality improvement.

Along with the improvements that come along with having better data, Charles adds there will be day-to-day benefits too. These include having access to a patient's chart from wherever you are and getting timely updates to the information.

“If people understand the potential, they’ll really feel interested and willing to go through some of the challenges and hiccups we anticipate with implementation.”

## Challenges and opportunities

As an associate chief medical information officer with CST, Charles knows there are challenges and opportunities that come with such a large, complex project. Designed to improve the quality, safety and consistency of care across VCH, PHSA and PHC, the CST project will significantly transform clinical practices and systems.

Challenges range from ensuring the new shared clinical information system is useful for those who will be using it – including Charles himself – to getting people on board and familiar with the new system and processes. But the opportunities far outweigh the challenges.

“There’s an opportunity here to do great things, and there’s a lot of potential for innovation. It’s exciting to know that we’re going to have this complete electronic record that’s comprehensive and patients will feel like they’re getting the best possible care from all perspectives.”

## Background information

The Clinical and Systems Transformation project is a joint initiative of three health organizations: Vancouver Coastal Health, Provincial Health Services Authority and Providence Health Care. The project is designed to transform healthcare delivery systems and processes to improve the quality and consistency of the patient and caregiver experience. CST will support the health organizations in establishing common clinical and process standards, including work flows, order sets, clinical guidelines integrated plans of care and a common electronic health record. This clinical transformation will be supported by the implementation of a clinical information system that will replace aging existing systems. The project will be implemented in stages across the health organizations.

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