

ClinicalConnect: A Year in Review

It's been just over a year since ClinicalConnect underwent a major upgrade. The HITS eHealth Office at Hamilton Health Sciences, responsible for operating ClinicalConnect, wanted to highlight all that's been done to respond to feedback and continuously improve the system's performance for end users.

Since the November 2017 launch, a number of new features have been very well received including the new Patient Dashboard, smart filtering functionality that allows users to more quickly identify what data they need, the Patient Visits Timeline, and also the ability to change where data displays, from the traditional 'top-bottom view' to the new 'side-by-side view'.

Concurrently optimizing the speed at which data is retrieved, while maximizing the amount of data that is available from otherwise disparate sources, and providing the right mix of features and functionality – major components of overall system performance – has not been without its challenges.

One particular aspect – that's now well in hand – was what appeared to be a great variance in system 'speed' amongst the broad user community. ClinicalConnect is a web-based portal that runs on 'today's supported standards', and as such, how quickly it responds to queries is most definitely impacted by the internet browser used. As an example, ClinicalConnect will perform 30% – 70% faster when using a recommended, current internet browser, versus Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE), even at its most recent version 11 (note that this version is now outdated and has been superseded by the company's Edge browser). Even in large hospitals where Citrix environments are often used, it has been determined that when using a recommended browser (Google Chrome in this example), ClinicalConnect operates four times faster than with IE. As such, based on demand from their physicians and staff, hospitals have, or continue to look at, upgrading the internet browser used within their Citrix environments. Given how current internet browsers so significantly improve system speed, numerous communications have been issued reminding users where possible, to use Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, MacOS Safari or Mozilla Firefox; all these browsers will yield better performance over any version of IE, and Google Chrome is currently recognized to yield the best performance.

Furthermore, in an effort to pinpoint the root cause of this varied system speed, the HITS eHealth Office commissioned a third-party to conduct a current state performance analysis of ClinicalConnect. The assessment looked at the time to search for patient, open the patient's visit, and then open a Lab record. Results of this study, captured between June 27 and July 5, 2018, confirmed that ClinicalConnect performs faster now, and with significantly fewer timeouts, than it did immediately following the launch when similar tests were run by the same company. Current usage reports support this study; how quickly ClinicalConnect retrieves data is relatively consistent month-over-month, and is very much in line with the previous release.

In terms of the features and functionality, updates to the portal have been made roughly twice a month, users were notified of how these updates improve system performance, and the HITS Health Office team, together with ClinicalConnect's vendor, will continue to make tweaks in an effort to consistently improve the end user experience. Users too can enhance their ClinicalConnect experience by setting their preferences to best align with clinical needs. Taking a few minutes to set module-based and functionality preferences can significantly improve system performance. As an example, if a user has their preferences set to retrieve data for "All Days Back", ClinicalConnect will perform slower since it's retrieving *all* their patient's related data from *all* source systems, and it's quite possible the user doesn't even need that volume of data. Within each module, click the 'gear' icon to set that module's preferences, or to set them all at once, just click "Global Preferences" from the top right hand corner of ClinicalConnect. In addition, 15-second 'how to' videos, plus related training materials, are available for most modules and functionality. Have a look at those most relevant to your job by visiting the [ClinicalConnect Resource Centre](#).

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