Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK Health Centre are planning for an information systems service interruption beginning at 1 a.m. Saturday, October 1, that will last approximately eight hours and have widespread impact. This is necessary to replace a vital piece of hardware that supports our health information structure.

The outage will affect many of our online information systems across the province, from clinical applications to email and Intranet/Internet. Although there will be exceptions, particularly in Central Zone, you can assume that most computer-based programs won’t be available. The following Questions & Answers provide additional information about this interruption. Please note that this document will be updated as new information becomes available.

- **When is the service interruption?**
  The service interruption is scheduled to begin at 1 a.m on Saturday, October 1 and is expected to last up to eight hours.

- **Why is this service interruption needed?**
  All of our information systems plug into switches that sit between servers managed by government’s Internal Services Department and the clinical IT systems used by NSHA and IWK. For redundancy and performance, there are two switches that allow data and information to flow through our systems. One of those switches must be replaced. To do so, Internal Services Department (ISD) must temporarily disconnect all of the systems attached to these switches.

- **Why was this time chosen for the service interruption?**
  NSHA and IWK clinical leadership chose this timing to minimize the impact on patient care.

- **How will we know if the service interruption is going ahead?**
  There will be a meeting of zone and provincial emergency operations centres (EOCs) at 12:30 a.m. to confirm that the interruption will proceed as planned. Immediately following this meeting, an email will be sent to the Nova Scotia Health Authority distribution List.

  Please log out of all affected clinical applications and do not try to access until you are informed that the system has been restored.

- **What will be the impact of service interruption on NSHA/IWK systems and clinical applications?**
  This interruption will affect many of our online information systems across the province. This includes Meditech, 3M, Client Registry, eScription, PARNS, Blood Coordinating Program, SHARE, SEAscape, email, Intranet/Internet and more. Although there will be exceptions, particularly in Central Zone, you can assume that most computer-based programs won’t be available. All health care facilities will be impacted to some degree. Some specific impacts are:
  - Meditech will be unavailable. This means no EMR results viewing, previous visits history, allergies, etc. All clinical support services that use Meditech – Lab, Diagnostic Imaging (DI), and Pharmacy will be using downtime procedures.
  - Provincial SHARE portal will be unavailable.
Paper requisitions will be required and sent to the performing department using site process.

Priority lab results will be processed and results will be reported to the unit/department via either fax, printer, phone or runner. Please check your local process to confirm.

Local point of care lab testing will not be impacted. Results will continue to print locally.

DI will continue to perform priority testing. Any images taken during the outage will be available in the Emergency Department IMPAX stations in an “Unverified exam” tab. If departments do not have IMPAX, then they will be able to view images in the DI department only. If patients are being transferred into Central Zone, DI results can be pushed to Central Zone via a request to the DI department; Central Zone can then view via the “Unverified exam” tab.

Priority ECG, Holter, and Paceart testing can be completed. However, the results will print locally during the outage and results will not be electronically transmitted.

There are no dictation systems available.

Fax machines that are direct connect to the phone line will continue to work.

Omnicell or Pyxis medication devices will work in override mode.

Please follow the downtime procedures in your area.

Intranet and email will be unavailable at the IWK and in all zones outside of Central Zone (Halifax Area, Eastern Shore and West Hants). Most employees in Central Zone will have access to email; however, it will be restricted to internal messages only. Regardless of zone, please do not rely on email during this service interruption. No email will be delivered to a NSHA mobile device. The Internet will be accessible through personal devices. Updates will be posted at www.cdha.nshealth.ca.

- **Why is Central Zone impacted differently?**
  The former Capital Health used a different patient information system than other areas of the province. That system is not directly connected to the switch that is being replaced.

- **What patient services will be impacted?**
  Programs and services that are usually open during the period of the planned downtime, including emergency departments, will be open as usual. However, staff and physicians will not have access to many computer systems. For example, we will need to register patients on paper and enter that information into the system once it is back online. As a result there may be longer than normal waits for non-urgent services during the downtime.

- **How will off-site and remote locations be managed?**
  Site leaders are part of the planning for this service interruption and will provide the relevant information to managers at specific sites.

- **What can I do in advance to prepare for this interruption?**
  - Ensure your phone lists are up-to-date, printed and easily accessible.
  - Print all patient forms you anticipate needing during the interruption.
  - Check “on call” lists before the weekend to confirm who is on call.
  - Print out necessary phone numbers.
  - Print emergency code procedures.
  - Ensure that any relevant policies or procedures are printed and available.
- Order additional paper and Meditech labels from Supply Chain – Logistics if required for your department.
- Print patient labels (if applicable) in advance, where possible.
- Print weekend/Monday appointment lists, if appropriate for your area.
- Print and post the following patient poster, if appropriate for your area.
- If you are not working during the interruption, keep your mobile phone audio notifications on overnight in case extra staffing is needed in your area.

- **We have a number of patient clinics/tests/procedures planned for Saturday, October 1. Will these continue as scheduled?**
  We expect that patient clinics/tests/procedures planned for Saturday, October 1 will go ahead as planned. If there are unexpected delays that result in some clinics being cancelled, we will share this information publicly via social media. We are also in the process of evaluating other communication channels for sharing this information with the public.

- **Will all systems and applications be restored at the same time once the technical work has been completed?**
  Systems and applications will be brought back online in a carefully sequenced order to ensure data integrity and process efficiency.

- **How will we receive updates if email and Intranet are not available during the service interruption?**
  A message will be emailed to all staff across NSHA and the IWK before the system is taken offline indicating that the service interruption is about to begin. We are exploring options for notifying staff and physicians once systems are restored.

- **What if I experience an IT service issue outside of expected interruptions?**
  If you experience an IT service issue, outside of the expected interruptions, please contact the help desk as per normal procedure.

- **What if I experience an issue that is not related to the system interruption?**
  If you experience any issues that are not related to the system interruption, please follow your normal after-hours notification process.

- **How will we communicate patient information during the service interruption?**
  Please use downtime procedures. Telephones and faxing functionality will be available during the interruption. Remember not to communicate patient information via text or BBM in the absence of other IT systems, as this would violate privacy/confidentiality.

- **What do I do if I need to access SIMS or AEMS?**
  Should you have a patient safety incident or near miss that needs to be recorded in the patient safety reporting system, please make note of all relevant details so that the incident can be entered as soon as systems return to normal.

- **Will patients notice any impacts as a result of this service interruption?**
  We do not expect any significant impact on patients during this service interruption. Because our staff will be using manual procedures during the service interruption, there could be longer than normal waits for non-urgent services.

- **How will I know when systems have been restored?**
  During the downtime, updates will be available at:
www.cdha.nshealth.ca/downtime and
1-877-473-5999 (automated voice mail message)

Updates will be posted at the start of the downtime and when systems are restored or if additional information needs to be shared.

We will also share restoration updates via email once it has been restored.

- **What happens if the restoration of these systems doesn't occur following the service interruption?**
  We are confident that the service interruption will be complete within the eight hours. However, contingency plans are being developed in the event of an extended downtime. If we encounter delays, we will communicate with staff and physicians through phone fanouts and site leadership.

- **Who is co-ordinating the planning and implementation of this service interruption?**
  NSHA Information Management and Technology (IM/IT) and the provincial government’s Information Communication Technology Services (ICT Services) and Department of Health and Wellness are collaborating with NSHA and IWK leadership to co-ordinate this work.