

The acronyms “EHR,” “EMR” and “CIS” are used differently by different vendors, organizations and countries at different times. Canada Health Infoway promotes distinctions that are fairly well adopted in Canada and Alberta.* These are adapted to Alberta’s present context as per below:

	Term	Definition	Explanation	Example(s)**
EHR	Electronic Health Record	Longitudinal collection of personal health information supporting multiple health service providers across the continuum of care with appropriate information securely delivered to authorized individuals.	An EHR offers a cradle-to-grave, read-only, aggregated view of information from multiple databases about key health events in an individual’s life; information that any health care provider may need in order to serve an individual.	Alberta Netcare Portal
EMR	Electronic Medical Record	Record of health services and related information maintained by health care providers in an electronic system for access and use by the providers.	An EMR helps healthcare providers manage the services that they are accountable for, including read-write provisions for local documentation, ordering, scheduling, result tracking, communications and billing.	MedAccess, HealthQuest, Wolf EMR, etc.
CIS	Clinical Information System	Integrated information management platform supporting the collection, access, use and sharing of information supporting the delivery of health services to persons and populations in multiple settings across the continuum of care.	In addition to EHR and EMR functions, a CIS facilitates the management of services delivered by organizations, such as registration, bed management, transition tracking, and resource allocation. Decision support and analytics are embedded to realize a comprehensive continuum-of-care collection of records supporting both health care and health care improvement.	MEDITECH, Sunrise Clinical Manager, eCLINICIAN, eCritical, etc.

The EHR definition is consistent with the Alberta Health Information Act, worded to emphasize distinctions. The CIS definition fits enterprise systems already in play in Alberta. It also resonates with the AHS vision for an integrated AHS Provincial Clinical Information System Solution.

Distinctions are not absolute: for example, there are some transactional EMR functions may be exposed within an EHR, and diverse EHR functions are incorporated in CISs. Moreover, terms are used differently in the American context (where the CIS definition is applied to “EHR” and the EHR definition is applied to “HIE”, or Health Information Exchange).

* The offered examples do not represent all software or vendors available or relevant in the Alberta context; they are illustrative examples only.

Additional abbreviations and definitions apply to a rapidly expanding domain of consumer health information systems.*

	Term	Definition	Explanation	Example(s)
PHR	Personal Health Record	Individually curated record of personal health history and ongoing health events which may be shared with health service providers.	A PHR allows individuals to record and track their own health history, observations and outcomes.	HealthVault
PHP	Personal Health Portal	Individually managed access to health information and resources, including all or part of a PHR and/or EHR.	A PHP provides access to health information, resources, one or more types of EHR content, all possibly integrated with PHR content.	MyHealth.Alberta.ca
PP	Patient Portal	Individual access to specific elements and functions of an EMR or CIS.	A PP is tethered to an EMR or CIS, leveraging that product to engage individuals as participants in healthcare service management through meaningful access to such functions as scheduling, communications, health maintenance, health status tracking and other EMR or CIS assets.	eCLINICIAN MyChart

Any of the above can be linked to one or more EHR, EMR or CIS and all can be integrated under a common patient portal gateway.