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## Docs use iPhone to access patient data

By [TARINA WHITE](#)

Rural doctors and paramedics outside Calgary are using the Apple iPhone to help save lives.

The small electronic devices -- which include a revolutionary phone, a widescreen iPod, and a breakthrough Internet device with e-mail and a desktop-class web browser -- are bringing patients' medical records into the hands of paramedics.

Physicians in Black Diamond launched the pilot project in April and two local paramedics have been testing out the technology.

The iPhones are linked with a software program that allows paramedics to pull information from the local electronic medical records in the Foothills Family Medical Centre in Black Diamond to the point of care.

Theresa Berry, a paramedic with Foothills Regional Emergency Services in the community south of Calgary, said the iPhone has become an invaluable tool for accessing necessary patient data.

"Often our calls have patients that are unable to give us the information that we request and that we require for further treatment," Berry said about trauma victims, unconscious patients, and those suffering dementia or mental illness.

"By being able to access their records at the clinic (using iPhone), we can get information like medication allergies, medications that they're on, past medical history."

Prior to the new technology, Berry said administering medication to a patient could be "hit and miss."

"It's always a good thing to know what they're allergic to as far as medication so that we're not administering something life-threatening to them without knowing," she said.

Berry said the medical record of a resident in the small town can be found using their first or last name, Alberta health care number, or address.

Dr. Tim Dowdall at the Foothills Family Medical Centre in Black Diamond spearheaded the initiative to improve communication between doctors, paramedics and nurses. The pilot project is expected to continue as long as funding is available from the Calgary Rural Primary Care Network, said Dowdall.

"The best thing would be to make the information two-way, so the messages can go back and forth or alerts can go onto a patient's chart," he said.

The iPhones have been modified to increase security of patient data with protocols that exceed those of banking machines and other secure networks, he said.