

Alberta Healthcare Invests In Qualitative Software To Aid Healthcare Research

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As part of the transformation of health authorities in Alberta, Canada, researchers within Alberta Health Services have invested in qualitative data analysis software to help understand the co-ordination and delivery of health services across the province.

In 2009, Alberta's nine independent health authorities and three provincial entities were merged and a new entity "Alberta Health Services (AHS)" was formed.

AHS is leading a large multidisciplinary mixed methods research project to understand more about different models of care and how they support collaboration among primary healthcare professionals.

The team is using qualitative data analysis software NVivo 8, developed by QSR International, to understand the interprofessional collaborative models that healthcare professionals are using, in order to provide care in new and innovative ways.

At its conclusion, the research team will share what it has learnt about the models of primary healthcare within Canada.

The project team's research methods have been primarily interview-based, with data collected in the form of field notes, individual and focus group interview data, and observation data from different settings such as meetings and clinics.

This data is imported into NVivo 8 and then classified or "coded" into themes. From there, it can be easily interrogated to uncover interesting insights into the future of Alberta's healthcare.

AHS Director of Knowledge Management Dr Cathie Scott says NVivo 8 has enabled her team to be experimental and innovative in its approach.

"It has increased our team's level of engagement and facilitates far better outcomes than trying to work across such a large team using manual methods. Especially for this disbursed team, which spans several countries, it's a new way of approaching research, which is quite exciting."

As well as helping achieve the research team's long-term goals, NVivo 8 is highlighting some interesting themes and insights along the way. One of these, explains Dr Scott, concerns different approaches to chronic disease management.

"We were working with two primary care networks that took very different approaches to chronic disease management. One had created a stand-alone clinic, and the other was developing a community of practice involving people who were doing hands-on care in diabetes," she said.

"We already had interviews from people within each of these chronic disease clinics and we analyzed them as a mini-project to look at each model and its advantages and disadvantages, and shared those insights."

NVivo 8 is designed to work with all types of qualitative data, from text and PDF documents, to audio and video files, and it also works with material in any language. In addition to the AHS project, the software is used in projects addressing some of the world's most pressing issues, including poverty in Africa, defense-related projects in America, and climate adaptability in Australia.

The full case study on AHS's use of the software - "Alberta Health Care Reform: Using NVivo 8 to deliver results, today and tomorrow" - can be read at http://www.qsrinternational.com/solutions_case-studies_detail.aspx?view=159

About Alberta Health Services
Information: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>

About QSR International and NVivo 8 QSR International
Find out more by watching the NVivo video on QSR's homepage: www.qsrinternational.com

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