

## Why We Want to be Meaningful Users of Health Information Technology

Government efforts to bring higher quality and safer care to patients through broad adoption of health information technology (health IT) have enjoyed bipartisan support for many years. Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles, Oregon is helping to bring this vision to reality by joining the ranks of hospitals and healthcare providers across the nation that are embracing the benefits of electronic health records and other forms of health IT.

Mid-Columbia Medical Center will be registering with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to demonstrate our intent to become "meaningful users" of electronic health records. MCMC is eager to participate in this historic opportunity because they believe that electronic health records will provide a number of advantages to our patients, including access by doctors to their patients' complete health picture, better care coordination and fewer repetitive tests as providers share information, and ultimately savings in time and money.

An example of the benefits of electronic health records to our community is when a pediatric patient who presented in the ER over the Christmas holiday with a very serious cough, fever, and change in mental status. This was a very sick little boy and Judy Richardson, MD was the physician on call who had to decide whether to send the family with the patient ninety miles down the icy Columbia River Gorge to the Oregon Health Sciences University pediatric ICU. Fortunately, because she was able to share the electronic health record, including lab results and x-rays, with the Pediatric Intensivist at OHSU and have a virtual consultation, she was able to treat the patient locally. Having an interoperable system of electronic health records saved time, money and quite likely the child's life.

I encourage other hospitals and physicians to help in bringing healthcare into the 21st century, so that the entire country will be able to enjoy the benefits of widespread adoption and use of interoperable electronic health records. Meaningful use of health information technology is in the best interest of patients, healthcare providers, and the nation.

Brian Ahier  
Health IT Evangelist  
Mid-Columbia Medical Center  
The Dalles, Oregon