

NEWS RELEASE



Date: January 11, 2011

Contact: Carol Robinson, state coordinator for Health Information Technology, 503-856-6662

Headline: **Help for health care providers moving to electronic records**

Subhead: *Electronic medical records improve patient safety and reduce costs*

Health care providers who serve Oregon's most vulnerable individuals soon will have access to federal funds that will help them implement electronic health record systems in their practices and in hospitals across the state.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced the launch of the registration program for eligible health care providers who serve seniors, disabled and low-income populations through Medicare and Medicaid to receive incentive payments. Oregon recently received federal approval to move forward on building an electronic health record infrastructure statewide to support Oregon providers.

"Every single patient in Oregon deserves to know that their medical records are accurate, up to date, and instantly available to health care providers," says Carol Robinson, state coordinator for Health Information Technology. "The work we are doing today will help make that happen."

As a means to improving patient safety and care, establishing a system for secure health information exchange is a key action item under the Oregon Health Authority's Action Plan for Health submitted to the Oregon Legislature in December.

To assist health care providers with the costs of implementing electronic health records, many medical providers throughout Oregon will have access to incentive payments, paid for under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Oregon's providers eligible under the Medicare incentive program can receive up to \$44,000 and those providers eligible for Oregon's Medicaid incentive program could receive up to \$63,750. For more information about the incentives, visit www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/.

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In addition, with broad stakeholder input, the Oregon Health Information Technology Oversight Council (HITOC), within the Oregon Health Authority, built a strategic plan for an electronic health information system where, in the future, every time a patient sees a doctor, his or her medical history will be easily accessed and up to date, and the individual's records kept private.

Implementation of the strategic plan through core technology services that also will support regional health information exchange efforts will take place in coming months.

“Few situations are worse than needing to treat an unconscious patient without knowing their recent medical history, medication allergies, or other critical pieces of information,” says Steve Gordon, M.D., chairman of HITOC and vice president and chief quality officer for PeaceHealth. “We now have a plan, thanks to the work of hundreds of people, to ensure that not only do health care providers and patients have access to medical records, but that those records are private, accurate and complete.”

The plan includes development of a statewide health information exchange, which creates a secure means for all approved health providers to electronically transfer medical records to other treating providers, labs, hospitals and pharmacies. Providing incentives to health care providers is the first step.

Electronic health records improve the quality of our medical care in several ways:

- We have control over who can access our private medical records and we can have access to them ourselves in a way that's impossible with paper records;
- We know what's in our medical records, just like our insurers do;
- Providers have immediate access to our treatment and medication histories, reducing harmful negative drug or treatment interactions; and,
- Unnecessary, invasive, or redundant tests or procedures will be reduced, increasing patient comfort and reducing costs.

The Oregon Health Authority is the organization at the forefront of lowering and containing costs, improving quality, and increasing access to health care in order to improve the lifelong health of all Oregonians. The Oregon Health Authority is overseen by the nine-member, citizen-led Oregon Health Policy Board working toward comprehensive health and health care reform in our state.

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