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More and more Indiana physicians are improving health care delivery using new technologies and electronic medical records

INDIANAPOLIS (Sept. 4, 2008) Americans see health care as a top issue in this election year. Millions are uninsured, countless others under-insured, and the cost of medical treatment keeps skyrocketing out of reach.

Doctors are dissatisfied too. They work in a system formulated for another century, a slower time and a less educated population. Many, however, are not waiting for sweeping health care reform to improve the delivery of medical care to their patients. They’re transforming health care – one doctor’s office at a time.

In Indiana, physicians increasingly are discovering a solution in health information technology. Consider that:

- More than 50 percent of physicians in Monroe County (Bloomington) and 76 percent of those in Orange County (Paoli) have adopted electronic medical records.
- In a multi-county area of Southern Indiana, 70,000 electronic messages bearing clinical information are delivered through HealthLinc each month.
- In Fort Wayne, 62 percent of area doctors use computerized medical records and more than 92 percent access Med-Web, electronically transmitting 550,000 diagnostic reports and studies monthly.
- In Central Indiana, DOCS4DOCS®, another clinical messaging service, allows 30 hospital in the state to sends an average 1.4 million electronic messages –
lab results, X-ray reports, clinical information and more – per month to 10,000 physicians.

- In North Central Indiana, Michiana Health Information Network provides health information exchange to a six-county area in northern Indiana and southern Michigan. The network offers services and supports more than 600 physicians and 2,000 health care providers, and more than 75 percent of the doctors have electronic health records.

- The Batesville medical community participates with Health Bridge of Cincinnati, which sends more than two million secure clinical results per month in a tri-state area.

Nationally, about 24 percent of doctors use full or partial electronic medical records. Clearly, Hoosier physicians are in the forefront of change – and more are learning how to get on board with technological transformation.

**A time for learning**

In fact, doctors attending the Sept. 19-21 Indiana State Medical Association Annual Convention have called their 2008 gathering: “Work in Progress: health care transformation.” A key education session during their weekend in Indianapolis will focus on health information technology (HIT). It will be led by two Hoosier leaders in HIT.

One presenter, Alan Snell, M.D, MMM, is chief medical informaticist for St. Vincent Health based in Indianapolis. He is responsible for development and implementation of new technologies, including electronic medical records (inpatient and ambulatory), designing patient connectivity strategies, and promoting the growth of health information exchange throughout Indiana.

“Adoption of new health information technologies by health care providers should lead to a more efficient and much safer delivery of health care services – and in a more pleasing patient experience,” said Dr. Snell. “Furthermore, once patients are communicating electronically in a secure method with their physicians, they will be more empowered to manage their own health care needs while experiencing better prevention and health promotion activities.”

Previously, Dr. Snell was chief medical information officer at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in South Bend. He led efforts to automate over 100 physicians’ practices
in the South Bend-Mishawaka community and conceptualized a community health information exchange in the mid-1990s, now the Michiana Health Information Network.

The other session leader, Todd Rowland, M.D., is director of medical informatics for Bloomington Hospital. Dr. Rowland completed a Fellowship in Medical Informatics at the Harvard/MIT combined program in 1998.

He is working with regional medical practices and Bloomington Hospital to develop HealthLINC that will allow doctors to gather and exchange secure, confidential data with other physician offices, outpatient clinics and hospitals throughout a multi-county region in South Central Indiana, speeding access to information and improving care for patients.

Dr. Rowland noted, “Our region has experienced significant EMR adoption. We are also having great success helping physicians get electronic in a more comfortable and incremental way with clinical messaging results delivery.”

Clinical messaging allows doctors to take baby steps toward implementation of a full electronic medical record by first exchanging test results electronically. The technology allows doctors to deliver X-ray and laboratory tests to patients faster and more efficiently, while eliminating the days-long paper process.

_The ISMA has existed for 158 years, carrying out its mission to promote sound health care policy in the public, private and governmental sectors and to support continuing medical education for the state’s doctors._

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