



HealthInfoNet

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Maine Launches Nation's Largest Statewide Electronic Health Exchange

Portland, Maine: As policymakers in Washington debate how to reform the nation's healthcare system, Maine has taken a major step toward transforming how care will be delivered to the state's 1.3 million residents.

Physicians, hospital leaders, consumer advocates and public health officials gathered in Portland today to announce that Maine's nonprofit **HealthInfoNet** network will "go live" this summer, making Maine the largest statewide electronic health information exchange (HIE) using clinical data. Only Delaware and Vermont have similar statewide exchanges in operation.

This announcement coincided with a visit to Maine by the **Obama Administration's** top health information technology official, **Dr. David Blumenthal**, who was the keynote speaker at the statewide Hanley Leadership Forum today in Portland and then visited Maine Medical Center's emergency department to see first hand how the new system will be used by medical care teams.

Under development for the past five years, HealthInfoNet will allow caregivers quick and efficient access to key clinical information they need to provide the best possible care for their patients. Health information technology is a major element of the nation's emerging health reform strategy. Electronic exchanges such as HealthInfoNet will be critical in connecting the rapidly growing number of providers using electronic medical records and other systems.

HIEs are expected to reduce medical errors and lead to better, more informed treatment decisions that will save lives and money. As HealthInfoNet expands services across the state, an estimated \$50 million per year in healthcare costs is expected to be saved as caregivers order fewer unnecessary and duplicative tests, procedures, prescriptions and hospital admissions.

Despite a substantial budget shortfall, the State of Maine has included \$1.7 million in its 2010-2011 budget to allow HealthInfoNet to "go live" this summer and to position Maine for federal matching funds that are expected to be available later this year under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Some \$8 million has been raised so far to build HealthInfoNet. Another \$12 million is needed to build out the statewide infrastructure. It's estimated that it will cost approximately \$6 million to operate HealthInfoNet on an annual basis.

Beginning this summer, more than 2,000 healthcare providers---including nearly half of the rural and urban hospitals across Maine and one-third of practicing physicians in Maine---will have access for the first time to HealthInfoNet's secure clinical data repository. Use of the system will be phased in over the next several months.

Hospitals and physician practices taking part in HealthInfoNet's current demonstration phase (which began in early 2008) account for more than half of the state's annual inpatient hospital admissions, 50 percent of the annual emergency department visits, and nearly 40 percent of Maine's outpatient visits each year. Following the successful completion of the demonstration phase in mid-2010, plans call for HealthInfoNet to be expanded over time to include other providers who care for Maine's entire population.

Today, a significant percentage of patient-specific clinical information in Maine is stored in paper-based records. Paper-based records can be cumbersome for caregivers to access---and very difficult to share, particularly when information is needed on an urgent basis. Through the demonstration phase, many hospitals, physicians and other caregivers across Maine will---for the first time ever---have access (with their patients' consent) to a more complete and up-to-date clinical profile of their patients. A new consolidated "electronic health record" (EHR) made possible by HealthInfoNet will contain critical information drawn from records that have traditionally been separately maintained in physician practices, hospitals, laboratories and other disparate care settings. Over time, the HealthInfoNet network also will enable individuals to have greater access to their own medical records.

Armed with more complete and timely information, caregivers say they can provide better quality care and improve the coordination of care, particularly for those patients who see several providers and receive care in more than one community or care setting.

Organizations taking part in the demonstration phase include Maine's four largest health delivery systems (Central Maine Health Care, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, MaineGeneral Medical Centers and MaineHealth) as well as an independent, multi-site primary care practice, Martin's Point Health Care, and an independent rural hospital, Franklin Memorial Hospital located in Farmington. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is developing a statewide public health information system, will be part of the demonstration phase. This linkage will support the laboratory reporting requirements mandated by Maine law for disease outbreak management purposes.

The health provider organizations listed above include 15 rural and urban hospitals and about 2,000 physicians. Many of Maine's other community hospitals have been involved in HealthInfoNet's planning process and are expected to become part of the statewide network following the demonstration phase.

"The efforts of HealthInfoNet to advance electronic information-sharing to improve Maine's healthcare are extremely important to protect the State's public health," said **Dr. Dora Anne Mills**, of Maine CDC, who pointed out that the federal government has called for the nation to implement more effective real-time public health event monitoring and rapid response in order to ensure that the population is protected from emerging public health threats. "HealthInfoNet is advancing this directive here in Maine," she said.

According to Dr. Mills, automated electronic reporting of public health threats has been shown nationally to improve the completeness and timeliness of reporting to public health authorities, compared to manual processes, allowing diseases to be detected and responded to earlier. The partnership between Maine CDC and HealthInfoNet will automate reporting from healthcare to public health, shortening the time required to respond to and protect the public from health threats

The information being automated between healthcare organizations and Maine CDC is already required by law to be reported to public health agencies in order to protect communities. The relationship with HealthInfoNet will make this reporting quicker and more complete for about 90% of the volume of testing currently being reported by the participating healthcare laboratories.

HealthInfoNet has retained 3M Health Information Systems and Orion Health to build and operate Maine's statewide health information exchange, enabling all participating healthcare organizations to achieve semantic interoperability in the exchange of data for patient care. In addition, DrFirst, Inc. has been retained to provide coordination in automating electronic prescribing services and access to medication history information to medical care teams. These three organizations have extensive experience building and operating technical networks in the United States and other countries.

Organized as a public-private partnership, HealthInfoNet has received funding support from a wide range of private foundations, provider organizations and state and federal government agencies.

Public opinion research completed in late 2006 found that many Maine people are concerned about the prospect of medical errors and believe that better coordination and communication among their providers is needed to improve healthcare quality and safety. Individuals in Maine and across the nation say they want more access to their own medical records so that they can verify the accuracy of information in the records and become more engaged in their own care. A Consumer Advisory Committee is assisting HealthInfoNet in the establishment of privacy and security policies designed to insure that systems are in place to protect the privacy of individuals' medical information.

HealthInfoNet was established in early 2006 as a statewide independent nonprofit organization. Its establishment followed a feasibility study and planning and development process that found strong support for a new network. HealthInfoNet's Board of Directors includes physicians, hospital leaders, consumers, employers, government officials, insurance executives and others.

For more information, contact HealthInfoNet Executive Director Devore Culver at dculver@hinfonet.org or Project Consultant Jim Harnar at jharnar@maine.rr.com---or visit www.hinfonet.org

SEE FACT SHEET BELOW

Fact Sheet

HealthInfoNet Demonstration Project Participants

Seven organizations (and many of their affiliated hospitals & physician practices) are participating in HealthInfoNet's 24-month demonstration project). Here is a list of the seven organizations, listed by category:

A. Four Major Health Delivery Systems & Their Affiliates

Central Maine Healthcare, Lewiston

- Bridgton Hospital, Bridgton
- Central Maine Medical Center, Lewiston
- Rumford Hospital, Rumford

Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, Brewer

- Aroostook Medical Center, Presque Isle
- Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, Blue Hill
- Charles A. Dean Hospital, Greenville
- Eastern Maine Medical Center, Bangor
- Inland Hospital, Waterville
- Sebasticook Valley Hospital, Pittsfield

MaineGeneral Medical Centers, Augusta and Waterville

- MaineGeneral Medical Centers, Augusta and Waterville

MaineHealth, Portland

- Maine Medical Center, Portland
 - Miles Memorial Hospital, Damariscotta
 - Stephens Memorial Hospital, Norway
 - St. Andrews Hospital, Boothbay Harbor

B. One Independent, Multi-Site Primary Care Physician Practice

Martin's Point Health Care located in Bangor, Brunswick and Portland.

C. One Rural "Safety Net" Hospital

Franklin Memorial Hospital, Farmington

D. Maine CDC

Total Providers Statewide:

2,070 (including 15 hospitals listed above & more than one third of the practicing physicians in state)