

Health Information Technology Update

Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County

The **Primary Care Coalition (PCC) of Montgomery County, Center for Community-Based Health Informatics (CCBHI)** is working with its [Community HealthLink Clinics](#) to put practice management and electronic medical/health records in place and use those systems to exchange relevant health information with other providers in the region. With the support of a Community Access Program grant from HRSA, CCBHI developed CHLCare, an open-source technology product that includes robust demographic information, an appointment-scheduling module, a visit planner, and clinical information including ICD-9 and CPT codes all in a single, shared system used by many clinics in the region. PCC is also using CHLCare to aggregate population data, tracking quality measures for diabetes and hypertension across community health link clinics. It also developed and implemented *The Clinical Desktop* through an Access to Digital Libraries grant from the National Library of Medicine. This functionality allows clinic staff and patients to easily access quality health information on the Internet. The grant also included training for clinic staff on how to assess the quality of this health information.

PCC is using the Metro DC Health Information Exchange (MeDHIX), funded through a Transforming Healthcare Quality through Information Technology grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), to provide the infrastructure necessary to facilitate exchange of electronic health information among CHLCare, other electronic health records, and mainstream health care. The information to be exchanged includes patient demographics, medications, conditions, allergies, and results of laboratory tests. Additional capabilities include electronic receipt of laboratory test results from Quest Laboratories and PDFconversion of faxed specialty consultation reports for inclusion in the CHLCare EHR. MeDHIX includes PCC's Montgomery Cares clinics as well as hospitals, where PCC also provides staff training for MeDHIX. As part of this project, picture ID cards were added to CHLCare and MeDHIX for safety net clinic patients to facilitate care and identify patients to hospital ER staff and consulting specialists. Both the picture ID cards and the MeDHIX "eChart" clinical summary available to ER staff are integral components of the "ED-PC Connect" project that focuses on identifying medical home clinics for ER patients to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

A formal report on the MeDHIX project highlights the complexity of confidentiality and privacy laws that govern patients' health information across neighboring jurisdictions. This is a significant issue in the DC area where patient populations migrate across jurisdiction borders quite frequently, further complicating the challenge of timely access to medical data for care continuity, quality, and cost effectiveness. In the report, the MeDHIX Principle Investigators lay out next steps for the sustainability of the regional HIE project, including the expansion of the DC RHIO and continued funding of safety net EHRs and HIEs across the jurisdictions. The full report can be accessed [HERE](#). Please contact Tom Lewis, Chief Information Officer of the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County, for more information at Tom_Lewis@primarycarecoalition.org.

The eleven Montgomery Cares safety net clinics use mix of EHRs, including seven using CHLCare, two in the process of implementing NextGen, one using Centricity, and one using eClinicalWorks. In addition, all use some safety net oriented features of CHLCare, including a distributed, network based specialty referral request and management system.

The PCC, the Montgomery Cares safety net clinic, and the Montgomery County DHHS are conducting a current state assessment and readiness assessment of opportunities and issues related to recent health reform legislation. Funded by Kaiser Permanente, the goal is to identify strategic directions related to

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EHR use and evolution, Medicaid/Medicare participation, meaningful use, and financial sustainability considerations.

The Montgomery County Health Information Exchange (MCHIE) group was co-chaired by Dr. Roger Leonard, VP for Medical Affairs and Dr. Tom Lewis of the Primary Care Coalition, with active participation by all the county hospitals, several of the safety net clinics, the Montgomery County Dept. of Health and Human Services, the Prince George's County Health Department, and many community organizations. Although submitted in February, 2009, the MCHIE final report continues to serve as a valuable reference for the planning and implementation of HIEs. Of particular interest are the findings of focus groups conducted among patients and providers utilizing safety net clinic. The report reflects the perspectives of community hospitals, safety net clinics, and community members on issues of importance for a successful statewide health information exchange. Although the MCHIE group dissolved at the end of the project, many of the members serve as advisors to the CRISP HIE implementation contractor, as members of the Maryland state HIE Policy Board, or as active members of EHR and HIE projects in Montgomery County hospitals. The full report is available at http://mhcc.maryland.gov/electronichealth/MCHIE_Final_Report.pdf