

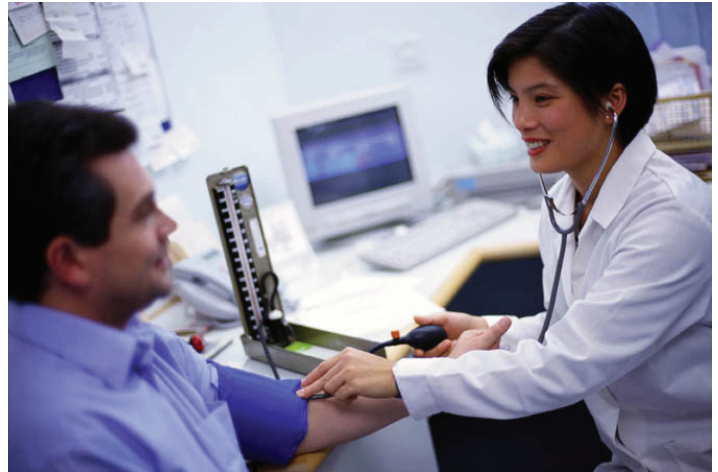
# A Healthier Iowa: One Community at a Time

## Rural electronic health record system is first of its kind

North Iowa is leading the nation's rural hospitals by implementing new technology that transforms the way health care is delivered. Seven hospitals have activated an integrated electronic health record (EHR) system considered first of its kind in U.S. rural health care settings. Nationwide, less than three percent of hospitals have such a system available.

Now patients at these seven hospitals will have their medical information stored in one electronic system. Everything from allergies, vital statistics, illness history, treatment records and nurse's notes is kept in one place and is readily accessible to doctors and nurses throughout the system. The EHR system puts the latest evidence-based care information at clinicians' fingertips when they need it—at the time care is delivered.

"These advancements clearly illustrate how an electronic health record system can be accomplished in a rural setting," said Iowa Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Coordinator Marvin Firch. "Additionally, this project benefits the entire health care system by promoting the seamless transfer of patient records regardless of whether the care setting is a clinic, rural hospital, urban hospital, or large medical teaching



hospital."

Participating hospitals include: Ellsworth Municipal Hospital in Iowa Falls; Franklin General Hospital in Hampton; Hancock County Health Services in Britt; Kossuth Regional Health Center in Algona; Mercy Medical Center in New Hampton; Mitchell County Regional Health Center in Osage; and Palo Alto County Health System in Emmetsburg.

Implementation of these new EHR systems in Iowa was facilitated by two grants from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The first was awarded to Hancock County Memorial Hospital. Funding supported planning among Mercy-North Iowa, its rural hospital affiliates and county public/community health agencies to ensure compatibility with the extensive electronic health record system used by Mercy North-Iowa and other hospitals across the country operated by its parent company, Trinity Health. The second grant supported a partnership among Mercy-North Iowa, the seven associated rural facilities, Trinity Health and the University of Iowa College of Public Health to implement a comprehensive integrated electronic health records system, complete with computerized physician order entry and clinical decision support tools and to generate lessons for future EHR implementations in rural settings.

### The benefits of an electronic health record system include:

- Better quality of care because medication orders will be processed more quickly via computer.
- Availability of clinical decision support tools, which allow the clinician to use all the relevant information including best practice guidelines, drug databases, and practice evidence-based medicine at the point of care.
- Cost containment in that fewer duplicate tests will be ordered; test results will go directly to the electronic chart, meaning that there is little chance the result will be separated from the chart.

Prevent  
Epidemics & the  
Spread of Disease

Promote  
Healthy  
Behaviors

Prepare for,  
Respond to, &  
Recover from PH  
Emergencies

Prevent injuries

Strengthen the  
Public Health  
Infrastructure

Protect Against  
Environmental  
Hazards