

Contact: Bob Carmony (Major Hospital) 317-398-5258
Michael Snyder (MEK Group) 317-805-4870

Major Health Partners improves patient care, safety with new advanced electronic records systems

MHP begins in-depth use of Electronic Health Records (EHR) technology well in advance of mandated federal standards

SHELBYVILLE, Indiana – The technology improves medical treatment, lowers costs and directly contributes to patient safety. It's so important that the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) includes a entire section devoted to its installation. It's also so important that if physicians outside of hospitals aren't using it by 2015, they will be subject to monetary penalties.

Major Health Partners is well ahead of the game. An early adopter, Major Hospital has been using Electronic Health Records (EHR) technology for nearly two decades, pre-dating its use by many other hospitals by several years.

Continuing an established commitment to add technology that improves patient care and experiences, Major Health Partners is now using a sophisticated Electronic Health Records system for two of its practices and more are on the way.

Physicians and staff at Major Sports Medicine and Major Pediatrics are the first to use the expanded system, which is expected to improve already high standards of patient treatment and safety, according to Jack Horner, president and CEO of Major Health Partners.

"This type of high-level electronic record-keeping will be required by law in the future for all hospitals and physician practices," said Horner. "Since the system has many benefits for patients, we started installing the system earlier than required and providing training for physicians and staff."

All physicians and medical professionals at MHP practice groups will be going online with the EHR system during 2010 and 2011, according to Dennis Schnepf, vice president of Physician Services at MHP. Schnepf is overseeing the EHR deployment.

"This puts us well ahead of the federal schedule, but the important thing is that our patients will reap the benefits of the system far earlier than many physician groups in southeast central Indiana," said Schnepf.

Physicians and staff at Major Sports Medicine and Major Pediatrics now use specialized laptops to access and record information while seeing patients.

"It is much more efficient than paper records and files," said Gregory Howard, MD, who heads up Major Sports Medicine. "I can now send prescriptions to pharmacies directly over a secure link and the pharmacists don't have to try and read any one's handwriting."

"Communication between other doctors and the sharing of important information is now very, very smooth," added Paula Gustafson, MD. Dr. Gustafson, who

is chairperson of pediatrics at Major Health Partners, said doctors, nurses and staff in the past often had to “search for patient records when they were on paper and filed away. This new EHR system completely eliminates that. I would never go back to paper.”

Under the new system, all patient records are digitized and kept on a secure server. This includes vaccine records, digital x-ray and other images, lab results and other critical information. Major Hospital has employed a similar system since the early 1990s, but new technology allows this to now be expanded safety and confidentially outside of the main hospital environment, according to Schnepf.

“Patients will like our new EHR system because the system can reduce time that patients spend in doctor’s offices waiting for reports, filling out forms or waiting at a pharmacy to fill a prescription,” Schnepf explained.

“The system has direct benefits for our patients,” continued Dr. Gustafson. “We can be in the process of seeing a patient who came from having lab work done and receive the information while we’re still with the patient.”

Dr. Howard noted that the system will minimize any opportunity of doubling up medication if a patient is seeing both a general practitioner and a specialist for the same condition. Since all patient information is kept electronically in one place, physicians and pharmacists alike can see exactly what the patient has been taking or has been prescribed.

“That improves both patient treatment and patient safety,” he said.

While both physicians and staff in the medical practices have to receive training on the new system, the training time is more than offset by the benefits to the practice and to the patient, according to Dr. Gustafson. “My laptop weighs less than some of the patient files that I used to have to carry,” she said.

Advanced EHR systems for practice groups are often commonly used in very large clinical hospital networks, but the installation of an advanced EHR physician system for hospital networks the size of MHP is “comparatively rare,” said Horner.

The full deployment of the new Major Health Partners EHR system will require about a \$1 million investment to complete. Savings resulting from improved efficiencies, reduced transcription costs and new federal reimbursement initiatives are expected to recoup the investment.

The extension of the new EHR system has been in progress for over a year, according to Schnepf. “We have a highly useful and productive EHR system already in place for Major Hospital and have had this at the hospital since the 1990s,” he said. Inside the hospital physicians and staff can easily access patient records, lab results, digital x-ray images and other information to treat patients.

While a hospital starts connecting physicians and practice groups physically outside of a hospital environment, “then the process starts getting very complex,” said Schnepf.

Major Health Partners maintains strict standards of patient privacy and security, so the transfer of and access to any patient records is “taken very seriously and protected at the highest level,” he said.

Previous paper records have been converted to confidential and secure electronic files, and paper records are kept secure according to law. Information stored on the Major Health Partners EHR is backed up regularly in separate secure locations, which

provides both additional security and reliable access in case one computer server goes down.

Schnepf's ultimate expectations for the EHR? "We expect the system will help us continue to both improve typical treatment and better manage chronic diseases for our patients and families in Shelby County and southeast Indiana," he said.

"This means better patient outcomes, lower costs of healthcare delivery and improved capacity for disease prevent and treatment."

About Major Hospital

Major Hospital is the primary healthcare provider for Shelby County (Indiana) and serves patients and families throughout southeast Indiana through the hospital and its vertical practice groups in Major Health Partners. Founded in 1924, Major Hospital has served as regional leader in successfully delivering a wide spectrum of healthcare services, including oncology and orthopedics. Ranked two years in a row as one of America's Top 100 Hospitals, and as documented by the national independent Press Ganey ranking service, Major Hospital enjoys a top ranking for inpatient satisfaction in central Indiana. It has also secured a national reputation as one the nation's leading hospitals in health informatics. For more information, please visit www.majorhospital.org.