



## **Press Release**

**Embargoed for release June 20, 2007**

### **PROJECT TO CREATE ELECTRONIC LINKS AMONG AREA EMERGENCY ROOMS AND COMMUNITY CLINICS**

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(June 20, 2007—Milwaukee) – Ask physicians and nurses across the nation what they need most to improve the efficiency and quality of health care, and the most frequent answer is instant access to reliable information about their patients. But the implementation of electronic systems for the exchange of information among emergency departments and community clinics has been lagging.

Now, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Wisconsin Health Information Exchange (WHIE), the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and Microsoft Corporation, a unique system is being established to secure and share medical information and to facilitate care coordination protocols that will assist in caring for patients, providing for better continuity of care, and improving patient safety. A formal kick-off meeting for the project, called the ED Linking Project, was held today at Children's Health Education Center.

"Emergency clinicians are often faced with very ill patients and a complete lack of past medical history that limits our ability to provide optimal care," stated Dr. Edward Barthell, a local emergency doctor and one of the founders of WHIE. "Within two years the ED Linking Project will have all Milwaukee County hospital emergency departments and the local FQHC's (federally qualified health clinics) linked so that information can be shared instantaneously. This will allow us to coordinate, and will improve both quality and efficiency of the care we deliver."

The project will support the work of the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, a public/private collaborative to improve health care for the medically underserved in Milwaukee County. The Partnership is governed by CEOs from local hospital systems and FQHC's, state and county government representatives, and the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

Leo Brideau, CEO of Columbia St. Mary's and chair of the Partnership, notes that one of the basic challenges in the Milwaukee health care delivery system is that many people do not have a primary care physician or what is termed a medical home. "The new information exchange network will facilitate care coordination



between area hospitals and the community clinics. Better continuity of care should result in better outcomes for patients.”

The WHIE system is designed to be useful for all patients, with an initial focus on safety net providers and emergency departments. WHIE has obtained commitments for \$5 million in funding to implement the ED Linking system in Milwaukee, including funding from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Patients enrolled in Medicaid will be among the first group of patients with data available through the system.

Now WHIE will be working with Microsoft Corporation, which will provide its unique Azyxxi software platform to implement the local information exchange system. Azyxxi, which was developed by doctors for doctors, aggregates and enables analysis of all relevant data across disparate systems, for a single integrated emergency department view of patient information. The software allows health care workers to maximize the value of information and make the most informed decisions. The WHIE system will be the first application of the Azyxxi software in this type of health information exchange.

The WHIE ED Linking system is expected to roll out this summer with initial hospitals connected before year end and 10 hospitals in total connected to the network over the next two years. An evaluation of the ED Linking health information exchange will be performed by academic researchers from the University of Wisconsin and the Medical College of Wisconsin.