

A look to the future

September 23 2008

Investigators from the Regenstrief Institute have led a demonstration of how health information exchange technologies developed and tested regionally can be used to securely share patient information across the nation during an emergency. This work builds on decades of experience in medical informatics and comes less than a year after the Indiana University School of Medicine received a \$2.5 million contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop a trial implementation of a Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN).

Secure sharing of health information can be critical in all types of emergencies – those affecting a single individual or thousands. It can also play a major role in preventing disasters.

The Regenstrief mock scenario involved a visitor from out-of-state who collapsed while attending an Indianapolis Colts football game and was rushed to a central Indiana hospital. Upon the individual's arrival at the emergency department, the health-care team was faced with making critical care decisions quickly in the absence of any information about the patient's prior medical history.

Using the NHIN, the team was able to retrieve important information from several out-of-state institutions. The information obtained from these outside entities changed the course of treatment for this patient, improving the team's response time and possibly affecting the patient's survival.

"Today's demonstration shows that health information systems that

communicate with each other have the potential to save lives, especially in emergency situations. These technologies have great potential to improve health care in the United States," said J. Marc Overhage, M.D., Ph.D., director of medical informatics at the Regenstrief Institute and president and CEO of the Indiana Health Information Exchange. Dr. Overhage is the Regenstrief Professor and a professor of medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

The demonstration, which accessed data from Ohio, Minnesota, New York and Indiana, was conducted at the September meeting in Washington, D.C., of the American Health Information Community. AHIC is a federal advisory body, formed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to advance the development and adoption of health information technology.

"Being selected to conduct this trial implementation of the Nationwide Health Information Network recognizes Indiana's leadership in health information technology," said Dr. Overhage. "Given our experience with both the nuts and bolts and the big picture of health information exchange, we see the NHIN as a necessary and very achievable goal."

Source: Indiana University

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