

News Release/Announcement For January 16, 2008
HealthInfoNet
Manchester, Maine

Maine people will benefit from safer, better coordinated and more efficient healthcare thanks to a new statewide medical information-sharing network that will be launched this year.

Physicians, hospital leaders and public health officials gathered in Augusta this week to announce that more than \$4 million has now been raised to begin construction of the nonprofit **HealthInfoNet** network, placing Maine among the first states in the nation to build and operate a statewide electronic health information network.

This new network will allow caregivers to quickly and efficiently access key clinical information they need to provide the best possible care for their patients. A growing number of healthcare experts believe electronic networks of this kind will help to reduce medical errors and lead to better, more informed treatment decisions that will save lives and money. As HealthInfoNet expands services across the state, an estimated \$50 million per year in healthcare costs is expected to be saved as caregivers order fewer unnecessary and duplicative tests, procedures, prescriptions and hospital admissions.

Beginning this winter, more than 2,000 healthcare providers, including 15 rural and urban hospitals across Maine and one-third of practicing physicians in Maine, will join with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (part of the Department of Health & Human Services) in a major 24-month demonstration of the new network. Hospitals and physician practices taking part in the pilot account for more than half of the state's annual inpatient hospital admissions and nearly 40 percent of Maine's outpatient visits each year. Following the successful completion of the demonstration phase, plans call for HealthInfoNet to be expanded to include other providers who care for Maine's entire 1.3 million residents.

Today, a significant percentage of patient-specific clinical information in Maine is stored in paper-based records. Paper-based records can be cumbersome for caregivers to access--- and very difficult to share, particularly when information is needed on an urgent basis. Through the pilot project, many hospitals, physicians and other caregivers across Maine will---for the first time ever---have access (with their patients' consent) to a more complete and up-to-date clinical profile of their patients. A new consolidated "electronic health record" or EHR made possible by HealthInfoNet will contain critical information drawn from records that have traditionally been separately maintained in physician practices, hospitals, laboratories and other disparate care settings. Over time, the HealthInfoNet network also will enable individuals to have greater access to their own medical records.

Armed with more complete and timely information, caregivers say they can provide better quality care and improve the coordination of care, particularly for those patients who see several providers and receive care in more than one community or care setting.

Organizations taking part in the pilot include Maine's four largest health delivery systems (Central Maine Health Care, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, MaineGeneral Medical Centers and MaineHealth) as well as an independent, multi-site primary care practice, Martin's Point Health Care, and an independent rural hospital, Franklin Memorial Hospital located in Farmington. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is developing a statewide

public health information system, will be part of the demonstration phase. This linkage will support the laboratory reporting requirements mandated by Maine law for disease outbreak management purposes.

The health provider organizations listed above include 15 rural and urban hospitals and about 2,000 physicians. Many of Maine's other community hospitals have been involved in HealthInfoNet's planning process and are expected to become part of the statewide network following the demonstration phase.

Don Ward, Director of Public Health Systems for Maine CDC, had this to say about the relationship between the state and HealthInfoNet: "Maine CDC has been a philosophical and financial supporter of HealthInfoNet since its beginning. The opportunities that this program offers through the electronic sharing of standardized, complete and accurate clinical and laboratory information will contribute substantially to the protection and promotion of Maine's public health."

HealthInfoNet has retained 3M Health Information Systems, a subsidiary of 3M Company, and Orion Health to build and operate Maine's health information exchange. These two organizations have extensive experience building and operating similar networks in the United States and other countries.

Organized as a public-private partnership, HealthInfoNet has received funding support from a wide range of private foundations, provider organizations and state and federal government agencies. Funding for the two-year pilot has come primarily from the Maine Health Access Foundation (\$2 million) and \$1.1 million that will be paid to HealthInfoNet by Maine's four largest healthcare delivery systems and Martin's Point Health Care. These provider systems have retained HealthInfoNet to provide technical services that will help develop their internal health information systems and lay the groundwork for the statewide network that will ultimately benefit all of Maine's healthcare providers and the patients they serve.

Public opinion research completed in late 2006 found that many Maine people are concerned about the prospect of medical errors and believe that better coordination and communication among their providers is needed to improve healthcare quality and safety. Individuals in Maine and across the nation say they want more access to their own medical records so that they can verify the accuracy of information in the records and become more engaged in their own care. A Consumer Advisory Committee is assisting HealthInfoNet in the establishment of privacy and security policies designed to insure that systems are in place to protect the privacy of individual medical information.

HealthInfoNet was established in early 2006 as a statewide independent nonprofit organization. Its establishment followed a feasibility study and planning and development process that found strong support for a new network. HealthInfoNet's Board of Directors includes physicians, hospital leaders, consumers, employers, government officials, insurance executives and others.

The Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF) has provided especially strong financial support for HealthInfoNet's development since 2004.

"MeHAF is committed to advancing strategic solutions to Maine's most pressing health care issues," explains Dr. Wendy Wolf, the Foundation's President & CEO.

“Our support for HealthInfoNet reflects the Foundation's confidence that this initiative can transform health care delivery for every person in Maine, but especially for our most vulnerable - including those who are uninsured. It is well established that people who lack health insurance delay seeking treatment, receive less coordinated care, and face higher risks of early death and disability due to their inability to easily access care.

“By bringing vital information and linking care across providers, HealthInfoNet can provide a virtual way to promote the safest and highest quality of care for our most vulnerable residents.

The Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF) is Maine's largest statewide, independent health care foundation. Founded in 2000, the Foundation's mission is to promote affordable and timely access to comprehensive, high quality health care and to improve the health of every Maine resident. MeHAF advances strategic solutions for Maine's health care by making grants to non-profit and public entities and supporting programs that target the needs of people who are uninsured and medically underserved.

For more information, contact HealthInfoNet Executive Director Devore Culver at dculver@hinfonet.org or Project Consultant Jim Harnar at jharnar@maine.rr.com---or visit www.hinfonet.org

Fact Sheet

HealthInfoNet Demonstration Project Participants

Seven organizations (and many of their affiliated hospitals & physician practices) will participate in HealthInfoNet's 24-month demonstration project). Here is a list of the seven organizations, broken into four categories listed A-D:

A. Four Major Health Delivery Systems & Affiliates (see affiliate below)

Central Maine Healthcare, Lewiston*

EMHS, Brewer**

MaineGeneral Medical Centers, Augusta and Waterville***

MaineHealth, Portland*****

B. One Independent, Multi-Site Primary Care Physician Practice

Martin's Point Health Care

C. One Rural "Safety Net" Hospital

Franklin Memorial Hospital, Farmington

D. Maine CDC

Participating Rural & Urban Hospitals (15)

Aroostook Medical Center, Presque Isle**

Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, Blue Hill**

Bridgton Hospital, Bridgton*

Central Maine Medical Center, Lewiston*

Charles A. Dean Hospital, Greenville**

Eastern Maine Medical Center, Bangor**

Franklin Memorial Hospital, Farmington (independent hospital)

Inland Hospital, Waterville**

MaineGeneral Medical Centers, Augusta and Waterville***

Maine Medical Center, Portland*****

Miles Memorial Hospital, Damariscotta*****

Rumford Hospital, Rumford*

Sebasticook Valley Hospital, Pittsfield**

Stephens Memorial Hospital, Norway*****

St. Andrews Hospital, Boothbay Harbor*****

Martin's Point Sites

Bangor

Brunswick

Portland

Total Providers Statewide:

2,070 (including 15 hospitals listed above & more than one third of the practicing physicians in state)