

Maine begins to build statewide HIE

Healthcare IT News

By *Bernie Monegain, Editor* | 01/16/08

AUGUSTA, ME - With \$4 million in hand, Maine healthcare leaders announced today they would begin to build a statewide health information exchange Feb. 1, making Maine among the first in the nation to build a statewide network.

Nonprofit organization HealthInfoNet is developing the network that will connect hospitals and physician practices across the largely rural state.

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It has retained the services of technology companies [3M](#) and [Orion Health](#).

"This project will be big and far-reaching - touching the lives of more than half of Maine's population," said [David Howes](#), MD, vice chairman of HealthInfoNet and president and CEO of [Martin's Point Health Care](#).

[Wendy Wolf](#), MD, president and CEO of the [Maine Health Access Foundation](#), said she and her colleagues view HealthInfoNet as a key way to provide better care for both insured and uninsured patients in the state. Uninsured patients tend to receive the least coordinated care she noted.

[Maine Health Access Foundation](#), which [Wolf](#) said is focused on provide access to healthcare for everyone, provided \$2 million of seed money for HealthInfoNet.

"This really represents true system change," [Wolf](#) said.

As HealthInfoNet expands services across the state, network officials estimate it will cut \$50 million per year in healthcare costs as caregivers order fewer unnecessary and duplicative tests, procedures, prescriptions and hospital admissions.

Public health component

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 and Human Services](#) in a 24-month pilot 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.

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Following the pilot, plans are to expand HealthInfoNet to include other providers who care for Maine's 1.3 million residents.

A new consolidated electronic health record 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, say HealthInfoNet officials. Over time, the HealthInfoNet network also will enable individuals to have greater access to their own medical records, they add.

Taking part in the pilot are 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 pilot project.

Organized as a public-private partnership, HealthInfoNet has received funding support from 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.