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Western Washington Rural Health Care Collaborative (WWRHCC), a non-profit rural health network, is now live with a web-based health information exchange (HIE) to facilitate electronic information sharing between three, expanding to nine, previously disparate, critical access hospitals and the Level I Trauma Center for Washington. The collaborative HIE, funded through a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Community and Rural Health grant award, is supported by standards-based technology from Orion Health.



WWRHCC Executive Director Elizabeth Floersheim says the Collaborative wanted to take charge of health care quality and delivery in their own communities. Selecting Orion Health was the obvious choice, after reviewing several other products. Orion Health was able to provide technology to implement a world class, complete HIE infrastructure solution including messaging, clinical data repository, master patient index, and tele-pharmacy capabilities at the most competitive price.

"Without Orion Health's technology, this HIE would not be in existence today. The solution's low cost of ownership and specialized training options meant our own IT staff would be able to support and manage the project after the initial implementation. Rural organizations need solutions that meet constrained budget and personnel restraints and are easy to customize and implement," says Ms. Floersheim.

WWRHCC is comprised of nine federally designated critical access hospitals serving all or portions of nine Western Washington counties. Allowing these disparate hospitals to exchange patient information was critical in achieving their goal of reducing costs and improving quality of care through a sharing of resources across the region i.e. tele-Pharmacy. Additionally, the ability to provide real-time information when transferring a trauma patient to Seattle will decrease wait time and improve the continuity of care for rural patients.

In looking to implement an HIE, the collaborative faced challenges similar to many rural community healthcare organizations - restrictions on funding, IT personnel and opposing requirements. The HRSA-WA DOH grant award provided a conservative fixed budget, but required additional functionality for WWRHCC to adhere to. Orion Health was able to help WWRHCC meet functional, budgetary and resource challenges by providing a low-cost HIE solution that was capable of being managed by minimal internal resources.

Orion Health President of North America and EMEA Operations Paul Viskovich, says WWRHCC showcases Orion Health's ability to provide solutions that fit the needs of small rural HIEs.

"Rural communities face many challenges, especially when it comes to access of quality and comprehensive health care services. Yet for many around the U.S. and the world, these rural healthcare facilities are their only source of healthcare. We were able to offer WWRHCC a health information infrastructure as good or better as any HIE in the country," Mr. Viskovich continued.

Orion Health solutions use standards-based technology to integrate data within a facility and external partners without incurring costly rip and replace approaches. Currently the company helps facilities and healthcare communities that connect 35 million patients with tens of thousands of active users.

About WWRHCC

Formed in 2003, the Western Washington Rural Health Care Collaborative (WWRHCC) is an incorporated non-profit Rural Health Network. The Collaborative is comprised of nine federally designated rural Critical Access Hospitals serving all or portions of nine Western Washington counties, with a combined network area population of over 154,000. We are managed by an Executive Director, and guided by an exceptionally "hands-on" Board of Directors.

About HRSA

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary Federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable. Comprising six bureaus and 13 offices, HRSA provides leadership and financial support to health care providers in every state and U.S. territory. HRSA grantees provide health care to uninsured people, people living with HIV/AIDS, and pregnant women, mothers and children. They train health professionals and improve systems of care in rural communities.

About the Washington Department of Health

The Department of Health works with federal, state and local partners to help people in Washington stay healthier and safer. Their programs and services help prevent illness and injury, promote healthy places to live and work, provide education to help people make good health decisions and ensure Washington state is prepared for emergencies. More information about the WA DOH and rural health can be found at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ocrh/>.

About Orion Health™ Inc.

Orion Health's easy-to-use solutions and applications improve patient care and clinical decision making by providing integrated health data in a single, unified view. By enhancing existing healthcare information systems, the Orion Health Rhapsody® Integration Engine, Concerto® Physician Portal and workflow solutions provide healthcare workers with easy access to patient data and trends, and reduce errors and omissions by streamlining information transfer.

Worldwide, Orion Health is implementing health information communities involving over 35 million patients with tens of thousands of active users including Maine's HealthInfoNet and the Vermont Health Information Exchange. Orion Health's partners include leading health system integrators and IT vendors such as Accenture, IBM, Oracle Corporation, Sierra Systems and others. Orion Health has more than 1,000 clients around the world, including Lahey Clinic, New York State Department of Health, UCLA Medical Center, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More information can be found at www.orionhealth.com.