

Technology boosts patient care

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The Louisiana Health Information Exchange has been instituted as a way to improve health care in the state.

The Exchange is a Web-based way to link various branches of health care, including primary-care doctors to hospitals and pharmacists, in order to deliver better and cheaper patient care.

The new system is being financed by a \$10 million federal grant.

David Callecod, chief executive officer of Lafayette General Medical Center, said no matter where you are, the doctor on the scene will have your medical records available.

The plan is to get enough health-care providers to join the network, which eventually must support itself through subscription fees by participating medical enterprises.

Cindy Munn, executive director of the Health Care Quality Forum, said she wants to involve all hospitals in the state, especially the larger systems such as Ochsner Health Systems, the Louisiana State University public hospitals and the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System.

Medicaid and Medicare have been authorized to participate in the medical record exchanges, as long as they are joined by private insurers with a comparable market presence.

Munn's group contracted with a California-based company, Orion Health, to provide the technical support for the exchange.

Rural doctors and hospitals are being linked to the system as well.

Other benefits of the program are expected to be sophisticated analyses of patient data and outcomes, comparisons of hospitalization rates of diabetes patients in the New Orleans region and those in the Shreveport region.

The patient's medical records will be encrypted to provide security at all entry points to the system, according to Jared Leonard, chief information officer for the Opelousas system. He said it will be as safe as paying credit card bills on line.

This Exchange is an example of how creative use of technology can provide benefit for the health care of individual patients.



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