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RIQI launches Direct Messaging program

The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI), a nonprofit organization in Providence, R.I., seeking quality and safety improvements for healthcare in Rhode Island, has launched its statewide Direct Adoption Program.

RIQI's Regional Extension Center (REC) is the first of the 62 RECs in the U.S. to adopt a program focused on helping providers understand and adopt Direct Messaging, a way for sending patients' protected health information (PHI) to known, trusted recipients over the internet.

Direct Messaging is email messaging that allows providers the ability to securely send information to other providers, specialists or hospitals that have a Direct email account, according to RIQI. By using an industry-standard technical infrastructure and legal framework, Direct Messaging ensures sensitive information is transported securely and delivered correctly.

As a result of RIQI's relationship and work with Aquidneck Medical Associates and Newport Hospital, the two R.I. entities used Direct Messaging to exchange information prior to a patient's ER admittance. The patient had visited Aquidneck Medical complaining of numbness in her arm. She was triaged by the nurse who immediately sent her to Newport Hospital's emergency department. While the patient was en route to the hospital, the nurse created an industry-standard CCD (Continuity of Care Document) and sent it to the hospital via Direct Messaging prior to the patient's arrival, such that the hospital had all of the patient's most up-to-date health information for treating her immediately.

Newport Hospital logged into its Direct account, opened the message and attachments, and accessed the patient's record and previous history. Once the patient was discharged, Newport Hospital used Direct Messaging to electronically send back an updated CCD for the patient to Aquidneck Medical. The nurse reviewed the information, added it to the patient's EHR, and then followed up with the patient to establish a plan for her care.

Direct Messaging is the foundational technology for several other RIQI initiatives which will help to improve continuity of patient care through improved communication. RIQI and Cumberland Primary Care recently completed a pilot project to connect the practice's EHR with currentcare, Rhode Island's Health Information Exchange. Through an automated process, clinical data for consented patients is sent via a Direct Message from the EHR to currentcare, where it is added to the patient's longitudinal health record. As part of its Beacon initiative, RIQI will soon launch a service to notify Primary Care Providers via Direct Messaging when their patients are admitted or discharged from the hospital.