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HEALTH CARE

'Meaningful Use' dollars begin to flow to R.I.

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PROVIDENCE – Electronic fund transfers from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for up to \$18,000 have been sent to six Rhode Island physicians who have successfully demonstrated meaningful use of an electronic health records system.

In total, up to \$108,000 has been received so far, said Ken Berry, program director of the Regional Extension Center at the Rhode Island Quality Institute.

The payments under the Medicare program include five physicians from Aquidneck Medical Associates of Newport, and a single practitioner from Warwick. The payments are federal incentives created under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 to reward providers who can demonstrate that they have met the 25 requirements of meaningful use for their EHR system to improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of patient-centered care.

The launch of the Medicaid portion of the program to qualify for meaningful use is expected to go live in July.

The payments under Medicaid will be a flat \$21,250 for the first year, arriving six to eight weeks after a provider qualifies, according to Berry.