March 6, 2014

Rhode Island Healthcare Providers Reach Direct Messaging Milestone

By Rajiv Leventhal

The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) has announced that healthcare providers in Rhode Island have exchanged more than one million messages using Direct, a secure way to send protected health information (PHI) to known, trusted recipients over the internet.

Direct—started in 2010 by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC)—makes it possible for healthcare providers to securely email information to other trusted providers, such as hospitals, specialists, pharmacies, and laboratories.

RIQI has integrated the use of Direct messaging into CurrentCare, Rhode Island’s statewide health information exchange (HIE). Direct is used by CurrentCare’s Hospital Alerts service to notify providers when one of their patients is admitted, discharged or transferred from any hospital in the state.

Direct is also used to transfer continuity of care documents (CCD) from providers’ practice-based electronic health records (EHRs) into CurrentCare. This feed of clinical information, with patient consent, from practice-based EHRs to CurrentCare is improving quality by detecting gaps in care and making sure the full record is available to all care providers, according to RIQI.

“Direct messaging has helped facilitate improved communication between primary care providers, specialists, hospitals, and labs,” Al Puerini, M.D., president and CEO, RI Primary Care Physicians Corporation (RIPCPC), said in a statement. “Direct has allowed us to exchange EHR data with other providers through CurrentCare and to receive an alert when our patients receive hospital care. These are two very important functions that allow us to better coordinate treatment and provide follow-up care with our patients.”

RIPCPC and RIQI successfully collaborated in 2010 to develop the technical mapping of Direct messaging. Currently, 162 provider sites throughout Rhode Island, representing more than 600 providers, are using Direct with 135 sites receiving Hospital Alerts and seven major EHR platforms participating in CCD integration.
As a part of qualifying for incentive payments under the meaningful use Stage 2 criteria, healthcare organizations and providers must meet data transfer requirements using Direct messaging. These requirements can be demonstrated with EHRs that comply with the ONC’s 2014 Edition EHR Certification Criteria which specifies electronic exchange of transition of care records with Direct messaging.

COPYRIGHT 2014 BY VENDOME GROUP. UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION STRICTLY PROHIBITED