AeHN Alaska eHealth Network™

Volume 3 Winter 2011

# EXCHANGE

NEWS OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH TECHNOLOGY FROM ALASKA AND BEYOND

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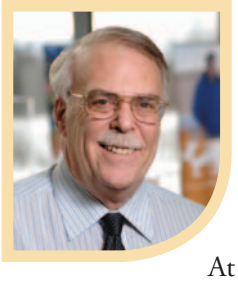
## President's Update



Happy New Year to All,

We are sad to say goodbye to Rebecca Madison this month. Rebecca has been with us since AeHN's inception and has helped to move this project to its current status. She is moving with her family to Maine.

At the same time, I am pleased to announce that Bill Sorrells has accepted the position of Executive Director. Bill comes to us from Elmendorf AFB and Evolvent Techologies. His experience in Health IT in Alaska and nationally will help to continue moving the health information exchange (HIE) project forward as we begin implementation across the state. I encourage all of you to contact Bill with any questions you have regarding the health information exchange (HIE).

AeHN will kick off the New Year with an HIE pilot of volunteer hospitals and ambulatory clinics. Our selected HIE vendor, Orion Health, has planned a very aggressive implementation schedule, which includes over 300 interfaces in 2011. We anticipate that anyone with a certified Electronic Health Record (EHR) will be able to connect to the HIE in time to meet the meaningful use requirements. The pilot is scheduled for completion by April 2011. At that time, we will begin working with providers who are already in the queue. Shared information will include the Labs, Rx, and ADT data.

It is heartening to see the number of providers who have signed up to the Regional Extension Center program. A complete list of new members is included in this newsletter. We welcome each of you and look forward to your input during this initial start up. The Regional Extension Center program is helping providers across the nation implement EHRs. For more information contact Jim Landon, jim@ak-ehealth.com, 866-966-9030, x4. Let us know how we can help you succeed with your EHR.

*Paul Sherry*

Paul Sherry
President

## AeHN Welcomes New Members

Welcome to the following providers, practices, and hospitals who have joined our network over the past few months:

- Alaska Center for Otolaryngology
- Alaska Womens Health PC
- Alpine Urology
- Anchorage Medical & Surgical Clinic
- Anchorage Pediatric Group
- Elaine Ponchione, LPA, ANP
- Juneau Family Health and Birth Center
- LaTouche Pediatrics
- Owen R Bell MD, APC
- Peninsula Internal Medicine
- Petersburg Medical Center
- Ptarmigan Pediatrics
- Summit Family Practice

We look forward to working with you!

### AeHN Membership benefits you two ways, Now and Later!

**Now-** Take advantage of Regional Extension Center Services such as readiness assessment, workflow design, IT support, training.

**Later-** Be a part of the health information exchange network when it launches in 2011. As a member you will be able to exchange key medical record information securely and privately with other providers, hospitals and labs.

For additional information including a membership agreement, please contact Jim Landon at 866-966- 9030 ext. 4 or jim@ak-ehealth.org.

# Health Information Exchange Pilot to Begin this Month

### The Alaska health information exchange (HIE) pilot project is in full swing.

Starting this month, the first phase is a pilot that connects four hospitals and four clinics. Pilot sites include: Alaska Heart Institute, Alaska Native Medical Center, Bartlett Regional Hospital, Faribanks Memorial Hospital, Providence Hospital, Tanana Valley Clinic in Fairbanks and Valley Medical Center in Juneau. Upon completion of the pilot phase in April, AeHN will begin implementation of HIE services statewide.

Initial HIE services will include the secure exchange of lab, Rx, demographic, admission, discharge and transfer (ADT) data. Priority for data selection was determined based on the requirements for meaningful use set by the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). HIE services are tailored to help busy practices meet the requirements for meaningful use within the deadlines mandated by CMS.

The goal of the Alaska HIE is to facilitate access to and retrieval of clinical data to provide safer, more timely, efficient, effective, equitable, patient-centered care. With one common interface to the HIE, providers will be able to connect to many services across Alaska, thus, eliminating the need to develop and manage multiple electronic health record (EHR) interfaces.

Providers who would like to be placed on the 2011 implementation schedule should contact AeHN's Director, Bill Sorrells, bill@ak-ehealth.org. Providers who have already signed up for Regional Extension Center (REC) services will be automatically placed into the HIE interface queue.

# Checklist for Practice EHR Readiness-Assessment for Meaningful Use Monies

Start the New Year right by reviewing a checklist for upgrading your EHR. Identify what's working and what's not, to give you a head start on your application for Meaningful Use reimbursements. Here's a starter-list of topics you should consider:

**Clinical -** how much template configuration took place BEFORE training? Did your team conduct workflow design sessions? Do you have a "super-user" to help oversee quarterly updates to the software and your processes? How much of the EHR's features are you using? Do you get complaints from providers on the time it takes to chart their notes?

**Training -** What percent of your clinical team completed vendor training and are fully utilizing the EHR system to chart patient notes, e-prescribe, and use a lab order-entry/result screen?

**Portal/Lab Interfaces -** Do you have a patient portal? What about bi-directional lab order/entry and results? Do you know that you can save individual lab interface costs by joining the AK eHealth Network?

**Technology -** Is your EHR's server slow or dropping its connection? What are your back-up plans for power outages, data backup, or a dropped PC tablet? Do you meet the HIPAA Security Rule requirements from the hardware/software environment perspective?

If any of these are cause for concern, or if you don't yet have an EHR, give Jim at AeHN's Regional Extension Service (REC) a call for services to help conduct an EHR Readiness-Assessment. EHR Service Partners can help you identify issues that need to be updated in order to qualify for Meaningful Use reimbursements.
**1-866-966-9030 ext. 4.**

*By Tracy Maxwell*
*President, Maxwell IT Company,*
*AK eHealth Network REC Service Partner*

# EPIC Pilot Launched at Providence Family Medicine Clinic

By: Anders Wennerstrom
Project Manager - Operational Excellence
Providence Alaska Medical Center

On the morning of October 1, the Providence Family Medicine Clinic (PFMC) turned on a new tool for quality patient care delivery – the Epic Ambulatory electronic medical record (EMR). The clinic was buzzing – there was both excitement and anxiety in the air; would everything work well enough on the first day for clinic patients to get the help they came for? The clinic was inundated with technical support staff and, after some initial hang-ups in the check-in process, things gradually started to flow.

Patient reactions were mostly encouraging and supportive during the first day. Provider schedules were reduced in order to allow extra time for documenting in the new system. As a result, patient wait times were no longer than usual.

Provider reactions were mixed the first day, but over the next week one could increasingly hear comments like, "Did you know you can…" as the docs began to share tips and tricks for getting more efficient with documentation.

> **"I think we'll be very happy once everyone is adjusted to the new system."**
>
> – Harold Johnston, MD
> Director, Alaska Family Medicine Residency

Several technical issues came up during the first few days, such as prescriptions being held up or printing in the wrong part of the building, but most were resolved in fairly short order. Workflow changes made providers and support staff team up on the spot to figure out how to send the work to each other or to remind each other of new or changed duties in the new system.

Some lessons learned from the PFMC experience are: a detailed review of workflows using the new system should be performed before go-live to ensure that staff and providers understand how to locate, perform, and complete common tasks; security profiles (who has access to what in the system) should also be reviewed in detail, in light of changing workflow; printing should be thoroughly tested since there are still many documents that need to printed and handed to patients, even with a modern EMR.

PFMC switched to electronic charts five years ago. Frustrated with the perceived inflexibility and complex navigation of the older EMR, many staff members and providers had been eagerly anticipating the new system.

Harold Johnston, MD, Director of Alaska's Family Medicine Residency and the PAMC said of the new EHR, "I think we'll be very happy once everyone is adjusted to the new system. Epic offers great capacity and options and overall is a much better system than the one we had."

# Capacity Crowd at November EHR Workshop

If the sold out attendance at the recent workshop is any indication, interest in purchasing and using an EHR according to federal standards called "meaningful use" is running high in Alaska. The five hour workshop, titled "From EHRs to Meaningful Use," was packed with useful information for attendees who either had an EHR or were ready to purchase one soon.

Presentations included a guide to reach meaningful use by two representatives from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Seattle region, Julie Bannester and Jennifer Magyar. Their session was rated "most useful" by attendees, although all sessions were rated highly. Particularly enjoyable and

Rebecca Madison describes Alaska's new health technology

relatable was the panel of EHR users moderated by Deb Johnson of Ingenics, with panelists Bob Urata, MD, Nel Loftin, MD, and Cathie Treadway. In addition, Tracy Maxwell of Maxwell IT provided pertinent information about workflow design and how to decide when to replace or upgrade an EHR. Rebecca Madison of AeHN and Paul Cartland with the State's Medicaid Program rounded out the program by providing information on current Alaska health technology activities.

Based on the positive response to the workshop and the request for more information, AeHN's Regional Extension Center plans to hold two webinars along with workshops in Fairbanks and Juneau in 2011.

Workshop presentations can be downloaded from the AeHN website: www.ak-ehealth.org

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# Sorrells Named Director of Alaska eHealth Network

The Alaska eHealth Network (AeHN) has selected William E. Sorrells, BS, MSA, MBA, one of America's leading health information systems specialists, to be its new executive director. Sorrells, who was recently Senior Director for Evolvent Technologies, succeeds former AeHN executive director Rebecca Madison, who helped establish AeHN (www.ak-ehealth.org) in 2008. Madison is relocating from Alaska with her family to Augusta, Maine.

William Sorrells

"Having Bill on our team is great news for Alaskans," said Paul Sherry, AeHN board president. "His expertise and experience will help reinforce Alaska's growing reputation as one of the nation's leaders in cost-saving electronic health records systems that protect patient privacy and improve health outcomes."

As AeHN's Executive Director, Sorrell's responsibilities will include assisting Alaska healthcare providers who are interested in using Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and participating in Alaska's Health Information Exchange (HIE). Among the first tasks for Sorrells will be to help facilitate the launch of Alaska's Health Information Exchange, one of the first in the nation, early in 2011.

**"Having Bill on our team is great news for Alaskans..."**

– Paul Sherry, AeHN board president

Sorrells, a retired Air Force major and a published author in the health information field, has been an instructor of computer information systems and business applications at several colleges and universities. He holds advanced degrees in Information Systems, Operations Management, and Business Administration. He is certified as a Project Management Professional (PMP), Certified Professional in Healthcare Information and Management Systems (CPHIMS), Certified Healthcare CIO (CHCIO) through the College of Health Information Management Executives and is a board certified Fellow through the American College of Healthcare Executives.

*William E. Sorrells can be reached via email: bill@ak-ehealth.org*