



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Doug Dietzman
Executive Director, MHC
(616) 486-4071
ddietzman@michiganhealthconnect.org

Five Michigan Health Care Organizations Launch Health Information Exchange called *Michigan Health Connect*

New Entity Will Enable HIE to Expand and Meet Community Needs

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – June 15, 2010 – Michigan Health Connect (MHC) is pleased to announce its establishment as a health information exchange spanning the state of Michigan. Five Michigan hospital systems are setting an example for how health care organizations can work together to advance health information exchange (HIE) across their communities. The mission of the nonprofit corporation is to advance the delivery of patient-focused health care across Michigan by collaboratively leveraging information technology and clinical data exchange. The goal is to provide the infrastructure so patient information can be securely and appropriately shared electronically between health care providers when and where it is needed.

MHC's founding organizations –Lakeland Health System, Metro Health, Northern Michigan Regional Health System, Spectrum Health and Trinity Health – had been collaborating for many months on clinical data exchange and leveraging their independent health information technology investments in Medicity's Novo Grid. They formally came together in March to create MHC and to further accelerate their collaborative efforts. The service area of the MHC health systems span 39 counties, covering 2.2 million people and more than 3,500 providers in a wide range of care delivery environments.

"This has been a bottom-up approach to establishing an HIE," said Doug Dietzman, executive director of MHC. "The progress we've made is the direct result of collaboration among the participating organizations, the alignment of their respective interests and business needs, the commitment to not compete on clinical data exchange, and the leveraging of existing technology and funding.

Our efforts predate the government's involvement in encouraging HIEs because we knew this made sense for our area."

Before founding MHC as a standalone corporate entity, the five partner organizations had collaborated to deploy results delivery, laboratory and radiology ordering, and electronic health record (EHR) / reference lab interfaces to more than 460 physician practices and community hospitals. This type of information was previously exchanged between physician office and hospital by fax machine. However, a large number of these practices have turned their faxes off – resulting in administrative savings, improved clinical workflow and enhanced patient care. This has been a critical aspect of the MHC's success and done with no federal or state grant funding

"We moved forward before the federal government was promoting health information exchange and EHRs, because we knew we needed a simple HIE solution that would enable us to quickly deploy HIPAA-compliant data exchange with these physician practices," said Patrick O'Hare, senior vice president and chief information officer, Spectrum Health and chairman of the MHC Board. "As it turns out, an HIE is also a critical component for physicians to demonstrate meaningful use and qualify for federal stimulus funding."

MHC continues to generate interest from other health care systems across the state as they look for ways to connect with physician practices as well as other hospitals. It expects to serve hospitals, physician offices, payers, laboratories, long-term care, public health, federally qualified clinics, behavioral health organizations, and all other community organizations who participate in the health care process.

Dietzman noted that with its expanding exchange foundation in place, MHC will be turning its attention toward aggregating patient data for community use and further leveraging Medicity's HIE platform for many valuable reasons, including enhancing the continuity of care for patients across community care settings and reducing unnecessary duplicative testing. In addition, MHC will continue collaborating with the state of Michigan on various initiatives and pilot projects to ensure ongoing coordination and sustainability, increased efficiency in state-wide transactions and close alignment with federal Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN) requirements.

"Launching MHC shows how organizations can control their own destiny and shape how they want a health information exchange to work for the benefit of the individual entities, the community overall, and most importantly the patient," says Doug Fenbert, division director, Trinity Health and MHC board member.

Board members of Michigan Health Connect are: Patrick O'Hare, [Spectrum Health](#); Doug Fenbert, [Trinity Health](#); Mark Gray, [Northern Michigan Regional](#)

[Health System](#); Norma Tirado, [Lakeland Health System](#); Bill Lewkowski, [Metro Health](#); Dr. Greg Forzley, [Trinity Health](#), Provider Advisory Committee Chair; Gary Lacher, [Spectrum Health](#), Security/Privacy Advisory Committee Chair.

About Michigan Health Connect

Michigan Health Connect is a nonprofit corporation founded by leading health systems in Michigan to advance the delivery of patient-focused health care across Michigan by collaboratively leveraging information technology and clinical data exchange as well as to extend the adoption of EHR systems across the provider community and facilitate their meaningful use. For more information, visit <http://www.michiganhealthconnect.org>.

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