

R.I. statewide HIE offers patient record locator service



The nation's smallest state is making big health IT moves. At its Dec. 8 Health IT Expo, the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) demonstrated a new data locator feature available on the statewide health information exchange (HIE), which RIQI operates.

A panel of RIQI employees appeared before a room full of local providers to provide an update on currentcare and to show off its brand new Patient Record Inquiry Service (PRIS), which allows providers to search the HIE database for longitudinal clinical records on their patients via web portal.

According to RIQI HIE Program Management Director Charlie Hewitt, currentcare connects patients, providers, hospitals, labs and pharmacies via six data feeds, with more on the way, and maintains a repository of healthcare data from participating patients, providers and healthcare institutions that are stored in a secure facility in Boston and backed up in one in North Carolina.

Data contained in currentcare, Hewitt said, is structured so that healthcare professionals can sift through it for public health reporting purposes and lab result information is normalized to standard codes.

Data is available on nearly 200,000 patients, according to Hewitt, and approximately 8,000 patients are signing up to participate every month.

Hewitt said that large healthcare organizations like hospitals, laboratories and pharmacies are able to receive and send data via HL7 channels. Office-based providers had to rely on currentcare's secure email service, but the PRIS will change that.

Providers will not be charged for the PRIS and it will be easily accessible via web portal where providers enter their login information and are required to confirm receipt of a privacy disclaimer every time that they sign in.

Once logged in, providers will be brought to a page containing a search field where they will input a patient's information to locate his or her record within currentcare. Providers will make a selection and be brought to a page with a header that shows the patient's name, gender, date of birth and age in years, and a set of tabs that allow them to view the patient's lab results, encounters with healthcare providers, documents regarding past care, medications, allergies and conditions.

If a provider chooses the lab results tab, she will be brought to a page that shows a record of all tests conducted on her patient listed in the order of the date they were performed. Mousing over individual items will show more information on those particular tests and selecting an individual item will bring providers to a more complete record.

Despite their newfound ability to immediately access patients' records, several audience members raised concerns, which chiefly focused on the potential for an abundance of information or for disorganized information.

Hewitt agreed that it may be a problem, but said that RIQI was constantly working to improve currentcare and asking other stakeholders to help. "There's a lot of development that needs to be done with the vendors that we work with," he said.

"Over time, we hope that this becomes a richer source of information," RIQI Beacon Program Management Director Darby Buroker said.

RIQI will be offering the PSRI in addition to its Provider Notification service, which informs participating providers via email anytime any of their patients is admitted to or discharged from a hospital.

The RIQI hopes to have 300,000 patients sign up for currentcare by the end of 2012 and is working on increasing currentcare's reporting and analytical capabilities and its records of medication histories.