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# eHealth News from the NITC eHealth Council

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## Pharmacies join NeHII

Recently, an important new category of providers was added to NeHII, further increasing the value of health information exchange (HIE) to residents of Nebraska. Two Nebraska-owned pharmacies signed participation agreements and will soon be exchanging data. Kubat Pharmacy, a long-standing retail pharmacy, has been doing business in Omaha and Fremont for the past 70 years. They have two locations in Omaha and two in Fremont, Nebraska. Amber Pharmacy is a mail order specialty pharmacy with locations in Omaha, Dallas, Philadelphia and Chicago. Medications are provided to patients with Crohn's disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Cystic Fibrosis, Organ Transplant, Oncology, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, Multiple Sclerosis and many other chronic conditions.

Physicians continue to recognize the value of NeHII. Dr. John Colling, an Emergency Room physician in Omaha, states: "NeHII is a great tool for me to use, as a physician, to see what has been going on with the patient and their previous care prior to coming the emergency department. However, when a patient opts out of NeHII, I feel their choice to opt out adversely affects their care. NeHII is fluid, easy to use and straightforward."

HIO Shared Services, a subsidiary of NeHII, Inc., recently signed a letter of intent with Wyoming eHealth Partnership and is moving toward completion of a contract to provide the technical and business infrastructure to facilitate HIE in the state of Wyoming. In addition, HIO Shared Services plans to provide implementation and operations management services to the state. NeHII and HIO Shared Services are pleased to have the opportunity to provide efficiencies related to cost and effort for Wyoming.

Deb Bass, NeHII Executive Director, addressed the Institute iHT2 Health IT Summit in Atlanta on April 5-6. She spoke on 'Health Information Exchange: Models for Sustainability' and 'Building HIE Adoption for Improved Care: Creating Physician Engagement.'

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Chris Henkenius, NeHII Program Director, served on two panels at State HIE Direct Boot Camp in Chicago on April 12-14. This purpose of this event, sponsored by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), is to bring together representatives from states across the country who will share information on NHIN Direct architectural components, deployment models, results delivery and the future platform.

Deb Bass and Chris Henkenius lead NeHII operations, serve on national committees related to HIE and address conferences in Nebraska and throughout the U.S. as featured presenters. They are available for community presentations and may be contacted at 402.981.7664.

## **eBHIN focuses on user training, prepares to go live**

Over the last quarter, the Electronic Behavioral Health Information Network (eBHIN) team has been finalizing the work to support the network HIE “go live” scheduled for summer in Southeast Nebraska. The data center has been established and has successfully completed a security audit. The NextGen team has been working with Magellan Behavioral Healthcare on development of the file transfer protocol to upload information to the State’s Administrative Services Organization. The file transfer process has been defined and is being tested between the two systems. The final touches are being put on the behavioral health shared record application and processes for upload to the HIE application refined. The consent for release of information has been finalized and will be used in all participant settings. End users will receive comprehensive system training in May.

## **Nebraska receives additional funding to accelerate EHR adoption by critical access and rural hospitals**

Wide River Technology Extension Center (TEC), the designated Regional Extension Center (REC) for Nebraska, received notice of funding from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) for an additional \$1,068,000 to assist with the transition from paper to EHRs for state’s 66 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and small Rural Hospitals in February 2011.

Dr. David Blumenthal, MD, MPP, National Coordinator for ONC announced an additional \$12 million in funding nationwide in new technical support assistance to help CAHs and small rural hospitals adopt and become meaningful users of certified health information technology.

The additional CAHs and small rural hospital funding will be administered through Wide River TEC. Wide River TEC offers a wide range of hands-on technical assistance, guidance and information on best practices to support and accelerate healthcare providers’ efforts to become meaningful users of certified EHRs under the Medicare and Medicaid incentives programs. Wide River TEC is currently assisting over 500 providers in Nebraska to help ease this transition to EHRs. Through an advisory role, Wide River TEC brings local expertise and support to primary care physicians and other healthcare providers with necessary technical assistance for successful EHR implementation.

Wide River TEC, a distinct business unit of CIMRO of Nebraska, was awarded a four-year cooperative agreement by the ONC in February 2010 with access to \$8,237,775 in grant funding conditioned upon achievement of specific milestones to assist Nebraska healthcare providers with EHR assistance. “We are thankful to ONC for providing this additional funding to assist Nebraska CAHs and small rural hospitals,” stated Greg Schieke, Senior Vice President of Wide River TEC. “We know there is great interest among rural Nebraska hospitals in adopting Health IT to improve the quality and efficiency of care. Wide River TEC will soon contact each CAH and small rural hospital to discuss their current state of IT adoption, and how we can work together to achieve a successful EHR implementation.”

“Critical access and rural hospitals are a vital part of our healthcare system. Health information technology can offer rural health care providers and their patients resources and expertise that may not be currently available in their communities. We recognize that the transition to electronic health records (EHRs) is a challenge and that rural facilities face even greater challenges to make the transition from paper to electronic records,” Dr. Blumenthal said. “This additional funding recognizes the need to address these challenges and represents another important milestone in our commitment to critical access and rural hospitals throughout the country as they transition to EHRs.”

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The new funding is provided under the Health Information Technology Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The HITECH Act created the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs, which will provide incentive payments to eligible professionals, eligible hospitals, and CAHs that adopt and demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology. Incentives totaling as much as \$27.4 billion over 10 years could be expended under the program, which is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. In addition, the HITECH Act provided \$2 billion through ONC to support technical assistance, training and demonstration projects to assist in the nation's transition to EHRs.

Wide River TEC is offering a complimentary service package for each eligible hospital. View Wide River TEC's [Critical Access Hospital web page](#) for details about our complimentary packages.

For more information about Wide River TEC, visit [www.widerivertec.org](http://www.widerivertec.org). For more information on the REC

program, visit <http://healthit.hhs.gov/programs/rec>.

*This press release was developed by CIMRO of Nebraska through funding from the United States Office of the National Coordinator, Department of Health and Human Services, grant number 90RC0018/01. Form No. 0116-0411*

## Use of e-prescribing grows in Nebraska

As of Feb. 2011, 82% of pharmacies in Nebraska were actively participating in e-prescribing, compared to 88% of pharmacies in the United States. This is up from 73% in 2009. Nebraska also has 1,446 unique prescribers as of Feb. 2011, up from 552 in 2009. As of Jan. 2011, 1,006 physicians were e-prescribing which is 31% of Nebraska physicians, up from 11% of physicians e-prescribing in 2009. Very few dentists are e-prescribing, which brings down the percent of total Nebraska prescribers e-prescribing to 25%. The table below provides additional figures on e-prescribers in Nebraska:

### E-Prescribers in Nebraska (Jan. 2011)

Prescribers	# of Prescribers	# of E-Prescribers	% E-prescribing
Physicians	3202	1006	31%
Physician Assistants	569	138	24%
Advanced Practice Registered Nurses	455	182	40%
Psychiatrists	128	32	25%
Dentists	1110	3	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5489</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>25%</b>

Source: Jan. 2011 data from SureScripts

*The statistics on e-prescribing have been provided by SureScripts to recipients of state health information exchange grants through an agreement between SureScripts and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT.*

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## Legislation addresses eHealth issues

The Nebraska Unicameral has addressed several issues related to eHealth in legislation this session. Here is an update on the status of the legislation:

**LB 591 Provide for a syndromic surveillance program and change immunization information exchange provisions.** The legislation includes provisions which will facilitate the electronic exchange of syndromic surveillance and immunization information. LB 591 passed on Final Reading and was presented to the Governor on May 12, 2011. The Final Reading copy is available at [nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Final/LB591.pdf](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Final/LB591.pdf).

**LB179 Change pharmacy provisions.** LB 179 eliminates the requirement for pharmacists to write the date of filling and sign the face of a prescription for controlled substances listed in Schedule II, facilitating the future use of e-prescribing for controlled substances. LB 197 was approved by Governor Heineman on March 10, 2011. The slip law copy is available at [nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Slip/LB179.pdf](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Slip/LB179.pdf).

For more about the requirements for e-prescribing controlled substances see the DEA's FAQ page at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/ecommm/e\\_rx/faq/practitioners.htm](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/ecommm/e_rx/faq/practitioners.htm).

**LB 237 Provide for creation of a prescription drug monitoring program.** LB 237 authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services to collaborate with NeHII to establish a prescription drug monitoring program. LB 237 was approved by Governor Heineman on April 14, 2011. The slip law copy is available at [nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Slip/LB237.pdf](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Slip/LB237.pdf).

## E-Prescribing Work Group meets April 24

The E-Prescribing Work Group will meet on Tuesday, April 24 from 4:00 to 6:00 at Mahoney State Park. For more information, e-mail [anne.byers@nebraska.gov](mailto:anne.byers@nebraska.gov).

## State HIE progress report is now available

The April 2011 progress report for Nebraska's State HIE Cooperative Agreement is now available from the NITC's website ([www.nitc.nebraska.gov](http://www.nitc.nebraska.gov)).

## Nebraska Medicaid anticipates making incentive payments in late 2011

The Medicaid and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs provide incentive payments to eligible professionals and eligible hospitals as they adopt, implement, upgrade, or demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology. Nebraska Medicaid is anticipating submittal of a State Medicaid Health Information Technology Plan for CMS approval this spring, with the goal of making incentive payments in late 2011. Be sure to subscribe to the EHR web page to learn more and receive updates: [www.hhs.state.ne.us/med/ehr.htm](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/med/ehr.htm). You can submit a questions to the EHR Incentive Program mailbox at [DHHS.EHRIncentives@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHS.EHRIncentives@nebraska.gov).

## EHR curriculum development grants awarded

As a component of the Wide River Technology Extension Center's grant to promote adoption of electronic health records in Nebraska, approximately 20 faculty at post-secondary institutions will be receiving awards to incorporate electronic health records into their curricula. There is a growing need to train students and health care professionals to implement and meaningfully use EHRs. Wide River Technology Extension Center, with funding from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, has contracted with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center to coordinate the curriculum awards

In January 2011 (Round 1) and May 2011 (Round 2), educators affiliated with accredited post-secondary institutions in NE were invited to apply for up to \$3000 to develop and teach an EHR-related curriculum (degree or non-degree leading course, training module, workshop, etc.). Round 1 awards were presented to 7 educators who expect to train

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over 350 health care professionals, staff or students by December 2011, and all of the courses will continue well beyond that. Proposals in both rounds came from a number of disciplines (HIT, HIM, Medicine, Nursing, OT, PT, Pharmacy) and from a variety of institutions (BryanLGH College of Health Sciences, Central Community College, Clarkson College, Creighton University, UNMC/UNO Bioinformatics, UNMC-College of Nursing, Metropolitan Community College, Mid-Plains Community College). Round 1 awardees are:

- *Siti Arshad-Snyder, MSCSM, Clarkson College, will integrate EHR materials into 2 courses in Health Care Business Management and Health Care Information Systems Management.*
- *Michele Faulkner, PharmD, Keith Christensen, PharmD, BCPS, and Tom Lenz, PharmD, Creighton University School of Pharmacy, are training pharmacy students to use a new interactive EMR.*
- *Diane Hoffmann, MSN, MEd, RN, Mid-Plains Community College, is developing a new Health Informatics course for students in Health Information Management, Nursing Dental, Medical Technician, and HIT office personnel.*
- *Lisa Lechowicz, MS, Metropolitan Community College, is creating a course which provides an overview of EHRs initiatives and meaningful use issues targeted to front-line health professionals.*
- *James McClay, MD, University of Nebraska Medical Center, is developing a joint Biomedical Informatics Program with faculty at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and he is creating substantial module on Meaningful Use and the EHR, for the Introduction to Biomedical Informatics course.*
- *Connie Miller, PhD, University of Nebraska Medical Center - College of Nursing, is developing an online self-paced course to teach UNMC-College of Nursing faculty ways to integrate EHRs into their courses.*

To receive *eHealth News from the NITC eHealth Council*, please contact Anne Byers, by calling 402 471-3805 or e-mailing [anne.byers@nebraska.gov](mailto:anne.byers@nebraska.gov)



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- *Michelle Rule, BS, Metropolitan Community College, is developing a 12-module, 36 hour prep course for the National HIT credentialing exam.*

A grant review committee is reviewing applications from Round 2 and plan to announce awardees by late May. More details about the application process and awardees can be found on the Curriculum Funding page at [www.widerivertec.org](http://www.widerivertec.org).

To encourage educators share ideas on delivering HIT and EHR coursework, a day long EHR Curriculum Conference is scheduled to be held in Lincoln on October 12, 2011. This conference will be open to the public, but will be targeted especially to the EHR Awardees and other EHR instructors to share teaching strategies and information on issues related to EHRs. For more information on all aspects of this initiative, see the Curriculum Funding tab on the Wide River TEC web site ([www.widerivertec.org](http://www.widerivertec.org)) or contact Elizabeth Willborn ([ewillborn@nebraska.edu](mailto:ewillborn@nebraska.edu)).