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**Colorado Among First States in Nation to Share Health
Information Across Health Care Organizations**

*Four Health Care Organizations Exchange Electronic Medical Record Data
to Improve Patient Quality and Affordability for Millions of Coloradans*

DENVER – Colorado has become one of the first states in the nation to demonstrate that electronic health information can be securely shared between hospitals and health care organizations at a statewide level. This data exchange will benefit more than 1 million Coloradans.

The effort, a key component of Governor Ritter's Building Blocks to Healthcare Reform, aims to prevent medical errors, streamline care, improve quality, eliminate costly duplication of tests, and promote health care affordability through interoperability of health information.

“Our health care system is broken and inefficient,” said Gov. Bill Ritter. “Our medical records systems have been virtually untouched by the technology wave that’s transformed so many other aspects of our society. This innovative effort will have a tremendous impact on improving the quality of health care and lowering the cost of its delivery.”

Currently, 500 emergency clinicians are being trained to use the system, which shares the following information across emergency departments at The Children's Hospital, Denver Health and Hospital Authority, and University of Colorado Hospital, as well as Kaiser Permanente Colorado:

- Laboratory results
- Medication history
- EKG images
- Radiology text reports
- Simple "problem lists" based on common diagnosis language

As a result of the new system, emergency clinicians have immediate access to critical, accurate health information that before was often difficult to track down in a timely manner or at all.

Now, doctors and nurses will know what medications patients may be using, if they've had x-rays already performed, or if they suffer from chronic conditions like diabetes. Armed with this data at the time of care, clinicians make better treatment decisions, patients are spared the cost of additional tests, and adverse events can be avoided.

The health information exchange, which officially went live on December 1, 2008, is coordinated by the non-profit Colorado Regional Health Information Organization (CORHIO), along with its four initial partners: The Children's Hospital, led by President and CEO Jim Shmerling, DHA, FACHE; Denver Health and Hospital Authority, led by CEO Patricia Gabow, MD; University of Colorado Hospital, led by President and CEO Bruce Schroffel; and Kaiser Permanente Colorado, led by President Donna Lynne, DrPH.

"On behalf of the CEOs of the four partners – three hospitals and a health plan – and the entire CORHIO Board, I want to express what a proud moment this is for Colorado," said Donna Lynne, DrPH, Chair of the CORHIO Board and President of Kaiser Permanente Colorado. "CORHIO's unique partnership offers a timely solution to many of the challenges we face in health care today. This project demonstrates that hospitals and health plans can work together in the best interests of our patients to

successfully deliver a system that promotes health care quality, efficiency, and affordability.”

Funding

The planning and development of the CORHIO system, which began in 2004, is supported by a \$5 million contract from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). As part of the Building Blocks for Health Care Reform, the State of Colorado has added \$1 million and The Colorado Health Foundation has provided \$2 million to expand health information exchange across the state. In addition to substantial in-kind investments from the four partners, direct funding has also come from Kaiser Permanente, United Healthcare, Rocky Mountain Health Plans and COPIC.

“AHRQ is pleased to have helped this important health IT initiative get off the ground,” said AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy, MD. “We believe the lessons learned in Colorado about secure electronic exchange of health information will help the rest of the nation improve the quality, safety, and effectiveness of care for all Americans.”

Interoperability, Health IT, and Health Care Reform

Interoperability of electronic health information and regional health information organizations have been at the center of the Bush administration’s plans to make electronic health records more readily available. President-elect Barack Obama has taken this to the next level by calling for health information technology to be a critical component of an economic stimulus package.

Investing in health information technology is also a key feature of the Obama-Biden plan to reduce health care costs and Tom Daschle, Health and Human Services Secretary-designate, has indicated that investing in electronic medical record systems is a top priority for health care reform.

Security Features

The CORHIO interoperability model, which pulls data directly from the electronic health record system of each participating organization instead of a central repository, is believed to be a safer and a more secure way to maintain patient privacy.

Information for Patients

Participation in the CORHIO program is voluntary. All patients have the option to opt-out of the exchange, which means their medical history information will be blocked from the system. Individuals can do this when they arrive in the Emergency Department of participating hospitals. Kaiser Permanente members can opt-out by calling Kaiser Permanente Member Services at 303-338-3800 or visiting www.kp.org.

More About CORHIO

CORHIO is a nonprofit organization with a mission to facilitate the electronic health information exchange to improve the health of all Coloradans. As a state level organization, CORHIO is a collaborative partnership, engaging the public and private sectors as well as a broad range of individuals, organizations, agencies, and policy makers to develop and support statewide health information exchange. For more information, visit www.corhio.org

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