

Missouri extension center begins EHR work

June 01, 2010

COLUMBIA, MO – The Missouri Health Information Technology Assistance Center, one of the 60 health IT Regional Extension Centers across the country created with federal stimulus funding, has begun its work aimed at helping thousands of primary care providers throughout Missouri select electronic health records best suited to their practices.

The center, which was awarded \$6.8 million through the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC), will assist 3,200 primary care providers in better understanding electronic health records through a variety of outreach and education programs.

Providers will learn how the technology can help improve the quality of care, as well as how they can qualify for the federal incentives for using electronic health records. Of the 3,200 care providers, 1,200 will be selected to receive services that will help them achieve meaningful use of electronic health records.

The center will especially target primary care providers who serve uninsured, underinsured and medically underserved populations, especially those in rural areas.

"Our focus is helping primary care providers select, adopt and begin meaningful use of electronic health records," said Grant Savage, the project's principal investigator and chairman of the medical school's Department of Health Management and Informatics. "We see this as a way to dramatically improve the quality of care for the neediest people in Missouri."

Data indicate that Missouri patients could particularly benefit from the electronically enhanced tracking and sharing of information about health risks and diseases.

"Missouri rates for cardiovascular disease, cancer, kidney disease, infant mortality, obesity and smoking are among the worst in the nation," said Karen Edison, MD, the project's co-principal investigator and director of MU's Center for Health Policy. "Electronic health records are another important tool that can empower patients and physicians in their efforts to improve health. Studies have also found that primary care providers are at the forefront of practicing preventive medicine, which is essential for improving population health and reducing overall health costs."

"Electronic health records are an increasingly important component of the University of Missouri's efforts to improve patient care, medical education, research and the economy," said Robert Churchill, MD, dean of the MU School of Medicine. "As the primary provider of medical education for Missouri, MU has a unique ability to lead this statewide transformation in healthcare."