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**Three Denver Area Health Care Organizations  
Link Patient Electronic Health Records to Improve Care and Safety**

*More than a million patients, three regional care providers and one real-time system lets doctors exchange vital health information*

DENVER, Nov. 16, 2009 – Three of the largest Front Range health care organizations are taking an unprecedented leap forward in health care reform by improving care for more than a million Coloradans with an interconnected electronic patient record exchange system.

The Children's Hospital, Kaiser Permanente Colorado and Exempla Healthcare are now live with an electronic health record (EHR) "health information exchange" system. It allows patients to show up at any one of the organizations' hospitals and clinics and have their records instantly available to doctors with the click of a button.

Being able to see and share this information enhances the quality and continuity of care for patients, as doctors share vital patient medical information through secure, encrypted Internet connections. As a result, health information exchanges such as this one will allow doctors to more efficiently and accurately diagnose patients and recommend treatments.

"We no longer have to listen to voice-mail messages or try to decipher unclear faxes," said David Kaplan, MD, chief medical information officer for The Children's Hospital. "Doctors now have instant access to a patient's up-to-date health records, which saves time and reduces errors."

The partnership is a pioneering example of three independent health care organizations sharing patient health records electronically, and is a concrete example of how health care reform is taking place in Colorado. All records are up-to-date and changes are logged in real time, helping the quality of patient care, no matter where and by whom they are seen.

Less than two percent of health care facilities nationally are using fully electronic health records, and only a handful are exchanging health information in this integrated manner -- highlighting the uniqueness of the relationship between the three providers.

"The Obama administration has made it very clear that improving the nation's health care system hinges partly on modernizing our industry with electronic health records, and then encouraging these systems to become more connected," said Robert Miller, MD, of Kaiser Permanente. "As a pediatrician, I've seen the benefits of health-IT exchange first-hand. With quicker access to more

information, I can now diagnose, treat and care for the children in my practice with even greater confidence and improved results.”

The three providers are in the process of an extended pilot program to test the system, and officially went online with the CareEverywhere electronic health care record software system this summer.

Access to patient records are secure and require authorization.

The foundational systems making this exchange possible are commonly referred to as EHRs or electronic medical records (EMRs), and can hold a wide variety of information including immunization records, blood type, lab results, X-rays, allergies, medical histories, current and past medications and dosages.

While investing in the switch from paper to electronic records costs millions of dollars, the result leads to more efficient, cost effective health care with improved safety, quality and communication.

Dr. Kaplan of Children’s Hospital adds that throughout the process, providers have kept a clear focus that while EHR is an important tool, it will never replace the doctor-patient relationship. A doctor will always make the diagnosis and prescribe treatment, not a computer. Having EHR available to health care providers will only complement that relationship.

“Traditionally, getting medical records from other organizations has been time consuming and inconvenient to the degree that clinicians are often forced to make decisions without complete information,” said Joe Heaton, vice president and chief medical information officer at Exempla Healthcare. “The systems we have put in place now allow for faster and more efficient access to clinical information, which ensures that our patients have uninterrupted continuity of care between the doctor’s office and the hospital.”

#### **Health Information Exchange at a glance:**

- Enhances quality and safety by reducing the chance for medical errors that occur when information is written down inaccurately or illegibly, or is not available to care providers in a timely manner.
- Promotes efficiencies as physicians can quickly access patient care documents electronically right in the exam room, rather than ordering a repeat of that test or exam that may have been done recently at a partner facility.
- Supports clinical decision-making by providing clinicians prompt access to comprehensive, “continuity of care” patient and clinical information when needed.

The Children's Hospital has defined and delivered pediatric healthcare excellence for more than 100 years. Founded in 1908, The Children's Hospital is a leading pediatric network entirely devoted to the health and wellbeing of children. Continually recognized as one of the nation's outstanding hospitals by U.S. News & World Report, The Children's Hospital is known both for its nationally and internationally recognized medical, research and education programs as well as the full spectrum of everyday care for kids throughout Colorado and surrounding states. With more than 1,000 healthcare professionals representing the full spectrum of pediatric specialties, The Children's Hospital network of care includes its main campus, sixteen Children's Care Centers and more than 400 outreach clinics. For more information, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org).

#### **About Kaiser Permanente Colorado**

Kaiser Permanente Colorado is the state's largest nonprofit health plan, proudly working to improve the lives and health of Denver, Boulder, and Southern Colorado area residents for 40 years. Kaiser Permanente Colorado provides comprehensive health care services to over 480,000 members through 20 medical offices and a network of affiliated hospitals and physicians. The health plan was recently named "Highest in Member Satisfaction" among Commercial Health Plans by J.D. Power and Associates for the second year in a row. Kaiser Permanente was also named the top-ranked commercial health plan and Medicare plan in Colorado by *US News & World Report/NCQA*. In 2008, Kaiser Permanente proudly directed more than \$75 million to community benefit programs to improve the health of all Coloradans. For more Kaiser Permanente news, visit [kp.org/newscenter](http://kp.org/newscenter) or follows us on twitter [@kpcolorado](https://twitter.com/kpcolorado).

#### **About Exempla Healthcare**

Exempla Healthcare, formed in 1998, serves metropolitan Denver through its three hospitals – Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center, Exempla Lutheran Medical Center, Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital – and the Exempla Physician Network of primary care, occupational medicine and specialty physicians. Exempla's mission is to foster healing and health for the people and communities it serves. [www.exempla.org](http://www.exempla.org)

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