

Rochester leads way with electronic record-keeping

By Robert Boyer

Correspondent

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Rochester — A consortium of business and health care providers has released *Going Electronic in Health Care, Rochester Leads the Way*, a report participants say will improve quality and reduce health-care costs.

The group producing the report was made up of the Rochester Regional Health Information Organization, Rochester Business Alliance, Greater Rochester Health Foundation and the Monroe County Medical Society.

The initiative began in 2003 as employers grew concerned about the quality of care against rising costs, said Sandy Parker, president and CEO of Rochester Business Alliance, and John Urban, president and CEO of Greater Rochester Health Foundation.

A press release by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation said a combination of electronic medical records and the increased use of the health information exchange makes patients' medical records more easily available to all care providers.

Going electronic with health care records will improve accuracy, and identify harmful medication interactions, the report said. It will also quickly cut down on duplicate testing.

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The transition for most doctors required new computer hardware and software, and training on the new system.

At first, this resulted in a loss of productivity. The Greater Rochester Health Foundation gave more \$1.6 million in grants and matching funds to help with the transition.

Nancy Adams, executive director of the Medical Society, said a crucial step for the doctors came when the Monroe County Medical Society established a service bureau.

Roughly 225 doctors have switch to electronic medical records, about five times the national level.

Soon, the community should enjoy greater benefits from electronic medical records and the information exchange, Urban said in the press release.

Patients' electronic appointment reminders and preventive care will improve, and chronic medical conditions will be monitored more effectively, with treatments adjusted in a more timely way.

Long-term, the health information exchange will support sophisticated analysis of chronic conditions, treatments and outcomes which can reshape medical practices and improve patient care.