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Legislators Receive New Toolkit of Resources on Electronic Health Records for Physicians

CHARLESTON – Members of the Legislature learned today about the leading role West Virginia is playing in promoting the adoption of electronic health records, which are gradually replacing traditional paper records.

Officials from the West Virginia Medical Institute, including Chief Executive Officer John Wiesendanger, showed lawmakers on the Joint Committee on Technology that West Virginians – including physicians, other health care providers and consumers – now have a full toolkit of resources available to help them understand electronic health records.

Patty Ruddick, project director of the West Virginia Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (WV-HISPC), said, “This toolkit includes pamphlets, brochures and posters that physicians can use to help their patients understand the many benefits of having electronic health records, as well as privacy and security precautions.”

These resources are available in both printed form and electronically in downloadable form at www.eHealthWV.org. Also available at the Web site is much more information about electronic health records and health information exchange.

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The eHealthWV effort – funded as part of a federal grant for educating consumers about electronic health records and the privacy and security issues related to them – is providing this information at this time, because the switch to electronic records has begun in West Virginia, and the pace is expected to pick up in the next few years.

The West Virginia effort is part of a national effort to educate consumers and providers about the importance of privacy and security in using electronic health records. The federal government has set a goal for most Americans to have electronic health records by 2014.

“Storing health records on paper was fine for the 19th and 20th centuries, but electronic health records offer us a 21st century solution that can help improve the quality of health care and the safety of patients,” Dr. Mark Stephens, a physician with the West Virginia Medical Institute and a practicing physician in Charleston, said. “It’s time for consumers and providers to understand their benefits.”

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