

## **A joint news release from the Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative, the Massachusetts Medical Society, and the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society**

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### **Massachusetts takes a giant step toward electronic health records**

#### ***First training session for health care providers on EHRs includes representatives from Brockton, Newburyport, and North Adams***

Waltham, Mass. – Oct. 5-- Electronic health records have been recognized as one wave of the future in health care and patient safety, and Massachusetts will take its first step in implementing this new technology with the first educational program in its first-in-the-nation pilot program to establish electronic health records (EHRs) in community-based settings.

“EHR in Your Office – Let’s Get Started!” is the title of an all-day conference for participants in the Massachusetts e-Health Collaborative’s demonstration project testing community-wide implementation of electronic health records in Massachusetts. It will be held Saturday, October 22 at the headquarters of the Massachusetts Medical Society in Waltham.

Sponsored by the Collaborative, the Medical Society, and the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), the conference is the beginning phase of a two-to-three year project that will study the impact and practicality of using electronic health records in community medical practices. The pilot programs were officially launched in March, with support from US Senator Ted Kennedy, Governor Mitt Romney, and Dr. David Brailer, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology at the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Three local regions and hospital systems serving those areas have been selected to participate in the demonstration project: (1) Greater Brockton, with Brockton Hospital and Good Samaritan Medical Center; (2) Greater Newburyport, with Anna Jacques Hospital; and (3) Northern Berkshire, with North Adams Regional Hospital. Physicians, health care providers, administrators, and selected staff from those organizations will be attending the session. The three sites were selected from groups in 35 communities who responded to the Collaborative’s request for applications in 2004. They were chosen for their local leadership and the commitment of the local health care community to using information technology to improve health care delivery.

“Electronic health records will ultimately have an enormous impact and benefit in our health care delivery system,” said Robert J. Mandel, M.D., M.B.A., chief operating officer of the Massachusetts e-Health Collaborative. “Not only will they improve patient care, streamline work, and reduce costs, but electronic health records will also help to address what is arguably health care’s number one goal: to reduce medical errors and increase patient safety. We’ve come a long way in developing a pilot program, selecting the hospitals to take part, and developing the training. This conference marks a giant step toward actual implementation.”

The conference will provide hands-on learning opportunities with practical tools that physicians can use in their offices. It is designed as a basic course, focusing on the fundamentals of implementing electronic health records. Additionally, it will address how such a program will affect the daily life of clinicians and staff and what is actually involved in their transition from paper to electronic health records. The demonstration project collectively will equip the practices of more than 600 physicians, supplying electronic medical records, support tools, and data exchange capabilities to support patient care.

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**The Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative** was formed in 2004 as an initiative of the physician community to bring together the state's major health care stakeholders to establishing an EHR system that would enhance the quality, efficiency and safety of care in Massachusetts. The value of electronic health records is widely acknowledged, but the significant capital and time required to implement such a system are frequently cited as significant barriers to adoption. It has been estimated that universal statewide adoption of EHRs would cost roughly \$1 billion. The Collaborative is fortunate to have a \$50 million commitment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts to fund its demonstration project phase. By pooling the resources, talent, and experience of its 34 member organizations and communities throughout the state, the Collaborative hopes to achieve a major leap forward in realizing its vision of better care for the Commonwealth.

**HIMSS** (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society) is the healthcare industry's membership organization exclusively focused on providing leadership for the optimal use of healthcare information technology (IT) and management systems for the betterment of human health. Founded in 1961 with offices in Chicago, Washington D.C., and other locations across the country, HIMSS represents more than 17,000 individual members and more than 275 member corporations that employ more than 1.5 million people. HIMSS frames and leads healthcare public policy and industry practices through its advocacy, educational and professional development initiatives designed to promote information and management systems' contributions to ensuring quality patient care. Visit [www.himss.org](http://www.himss.org) for more information.

**The Massachusetts Medical Society**, with more than 18,300 physicians and student members, is dedicated to educating and advocating for the patients and physicians of Massachusetts. The Society publishes *The New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the world's leading medical journals; the *Journal Watch* family of professional newsletters covering 11 specialties; and *AIDS Clinical Care*. The Society is also a leader in continuing medical education for health care professionals throughout Massachusetts, conducting a variety of medical education programs for physicians and health care professionals. Founded in 1781, MMS is the oldest continuously operating medical society in the country. For more information, visit [www.massmed.org](http://www.massmed.org).

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