South Carolina Department of Health & Human Services

Managing the Medicaid program to provide the best healthcare value for South Carolinians.

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New Internet Tool Puts Patient Information at Physicians' Fingertips

Experts have long known that the health care industry has trailed in the use of information technology. But now South Carolina is leading the way in making vital patient records available to physicians, clinics and hospitals with Internet access.

The South Carolina Health Information Exchange (SCHIEx) is a *free*, easy to use web tool that allows health care providers to use a computer to call up the medical histories of patients, including prescribed medications and treatment they have received at other medical facilities. Knowledge of a patient's medical history can greatly enhance the ability of the physician to provide effective treatment, particularly in emergency situations.

SCHIEx is a collaborative effort between the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics and several health care associations. The first phase of SCHIEx launches in July and features medical claims data for as many as 700,000 South Carolina Medicaid recipients. This will allow physicians to instantly see up to 10 year's worth of a patient's Medicaid claims, including:

- Past diagnoses
- Past and current medications
- Provider visits and hospitalization history

Access to this information can help prevent dangerous drug contraindications, eliminate unnecessary tests and make it easier to diagnose conditions.

Medicaid claims are only the beginning. Subsequent stages of SCHIEx will allow for the sharing of data from existing Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) systems, immunization records, lab results and hospital records. Data is not stored in SCHIEx, but transferred through the system to physicians, creating a "Network of Networks" that links existing data systems and allows physicians to quickly pluck selected information from multiple sources.

The project was successfully piloted with the Lakelands Rural Health Network, which serves Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, McCormick, and Saluda counties. "This is a remarkable project," said Dr. Gary Goforth, Director of Medical Education and the Family Medicine Residency Program at Self Regional Medical Center in Greenwood. "We will now have a dramatic improvement in access to patient health information that will allow us to provide better treatment because we can see what's happened with the patient over several years."

Because patient privacy is a very important, SCHIEx is available only to registered providers and information is transmitted through a secure, password protected web portal that utilizes the highest standards in Internet security. Medicaid beneficiaries who do not wish to have their information shared through the SCHIEx system also have the opportunity to opt out.

SCHIEx is made possible through an initial investment of $250,000 from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. CareEvolution, a Michigan-based technology company, donated the hardware and software needed to make SCHIEx a reality. The South Carolina office of Research and Statistics designed the Record Locator Service (RLS) that drives SCHIEx. Other partners include the SC Hospital Association, the SC Primary Health Care Association, the Rural Health Association and the SC Free Clinic Association.

For more information about SCHIEx and to view an online demonstration, visit www.schiex.org.