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Wyoming County Community Health System Announces Major Milestone in Achieving Federal Guidelines for Implementing Electronic Health Records

Warsaw, New York, November 29, 2011 - Wyoming County Community Health System's Board of Managers (WCCHS) is pleased to announce that they have successfully met the standards for achieving the 1st Stage of "Meaningful Use", a phrase commonly used in the health care industry to describe the implementation of a certified Electronic Health Records (EHR) system for all patients. WCCHS was awarded \$1.26 million for meeting these standards prior to the 2013 deadline. WCCHS is one of only 300 hospitals in the nation to complete Stage 1 requirements and receive incentive payments for meeting the federally mandated standards for EHR implementation.

Electronic Health Records (EHRs) are meant to improve patient care, reduce costs, enhance provider decision-making, and optimize data for research and reporting. Stage 1 included activities to electronically capture health information in a coded format across the entire health system. There are 14 core objectives to meet during this phase, which include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE): an electronic method of ordering and verifying medications for patients;
- Medication Lists: a tracking method for listing all medications a patient is currently taking to reduce drug interactions and/or potential allergy interactions; and
- Interoperability: the ability for WCCHS to securely and rapidly transfer patient information from one location to another for patient care and safety, especially in emergency situations.

Achieving these standards for Stage 1 of Meaningful Use required extraordinary effort and time by all members of WCCHS - staff, physicians, and administration. Dr. J. T. Reagan, Patricia Millen, Jane Beechler, Lori Roche, and Jason Beck comprised the dynamic team that led WCCHS staff and Board of Managers through the challenges of implementing a new and complex system - registering patients, ordering medications and procedures, reviewing charts, and admitting/discharging patients. They collected and submitted 90 days of data to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in order to receive their award of \$1.26 million and certification for successfully completing Stage 1.

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The challenges are not over. WCCHS is still required to implement Stages 2 and 3 for full certification and implementation of their Electronic Health Records (EHR). Current budgets are still constrained due to State and Federal reductions in funding from sources that are not controlled by WCCHS Administration and/or the County Board of Supervisors.

The funds awarded to WCCHS for completing Stage 1 will, in part, offset the cost of the hardware and software that was initially purchased in order to implement the new EHR system. In order to successfully implement Stages 2 and 3, WCCHS will continue to invest funds and make necessary purchases for the purpose of improving patient care and enhancing the availability of clinical information. Similar to Stage 1 completion, there are financial incentives available to WCCHS for successfully completing the next two (2) stages.

Completing all three (3) stages is required for full certification of a qualified EHR system. Additionally, meeting the standards for implementation for all three (3) stages as determined by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) is another step in securing full reimbursement for current and future Medicare rates.

The mission of WCCHS is to provide outstanding primary hospital care and make a positive difference in the health of our rural community.

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