



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Transition to electronic health records is now complete at Randolph Medical Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Harold Brown

(334) 206-5396

A successfully completed electronic health record pilot project at Randolph Medical Center in Roanoke proves that even a small rural hospital can convert to electronic health records. The 18-month project was funded by a grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration and managed by the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health Development of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson stated at the conclusion of the project in East Alabama, "Many Alabama communities face geographic and other barriers to access care. The positive results of this pilot help better position Alabama hospitals to take advantage of millions of dollars provided by the federal stimulus incentives."

The federal government promotes electronic medical records to reduce medical errors and improve the quality of care. The economic stimulus package provides an economic incentive to hospitals to develop electronic health records. The sooner hospitals convert to the electronic record the better, because penalties will be imposed for Medicare and Medicaid providers who do not comply by 2015.

Randolph Medical Center started implementing an electronic health record in the fall of 2007 to:

- Improve automation of all medical and administrative departments
- Upgrade a network link to East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika to obtain patient information
- Establish a reporting/trending system
- Create a system to follow up with patients at risk for cardiovascular disease

Tim Harlin, chief executive officer for Randolph Medical Center, said, "Small rural hospitals may have more of a challenge in meeting the federal stimulus mandates due to their small size and lack of capital for technology improvements. Our valuable experience in completing this process can only help other hospitals implement electronic health records."

Randolph Medical Center, which has 25 licensed beds, is one of three hospitals in Alabama to be designated a Critical Access Hospital under the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program. The Critical Access Hospital program requires that these hospitals limit their number of beds to receive enhanced reimbursement for their Medicare patients.

7/24/09