## Patients Connected and Protected by Records Exchange at ERs
### Lowcountry hospitals share benefits of expanding electronic records effort

CHARLESTON, S.C. (April 10, 2012) – The Carolina eHealth Alliance (CeHA) announced today that the 11 emergency departments of all major Charleston-area hospitals are now connected through a patient health information exchange that links electronic medical records, saving critical time and reducing costs.

"All of our emergency departments have had instances where a patient is incapacitated and cannot discuss symptoms or medical history," said Karen Kriza, M.D., director emergency services, Trident Health. "Now through the exchange, we can quickly locate key electronic portions of their medical records such as discharge summaries, lab/pathology, radiology results and medications and drug allergies. That allows us to provide effective treatment more rapidly."

During a news conference at Roper Hospital leaders from all of the hospitals stood side by side. CeHA chairman and MUSC President Ray Greenberg, M.D., Ph.D. and David Dunlap, FACHE, former CeHA chairman and Roper St. Francis Healthcare President and CEO outlined the status of the Alliance. Greenberg said East Cooper Medical Center is the newest member using the system; Naval Health Clinic, Charleston, will come online in May, and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center will follow in the near future.

"The next step in the program is to expand CeHA to more than 875 primary/ambulatory care physicians across the Lowcountry by the end of 2012 with the overarching goal of eliminating critical delays in emergency care," said Dunlap. "This is a connectivity of healthcare that has never existed, and it's been made possible through the collaborative spirit of the local health providers."

The president of the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) applauds the early success and unity of the Alliance.

"Carolina eHealth Alliance is on the leading edge of patient care and is protecting patients by keeping them connected to a network of providers with no concern for the competition that is inherent in the healthcare industry," said Thornton Kirby, FACHE, president and CEO, South Carolina Hospital Association. "CeHA has implemented a model we hope will be followed by healthcare providers in other communities and eventually state-wide."

At the announcement, Alliance members shared details from an on-going clinical study analyzing the utilization and impact of CeHA.

"In the first six months of the CeHA impact study, thousands of patient visits were tracked. During those visits, the clinicians using the system said that significant time was saved in 75 percent of the cases where a patient had visited more than one emergency room. That time saved to the patient averaged about 29 minutes per case," said Greenberg. "The savings in costs to patients and to the providers annually will be in the millions of dollars. For example almost $900,000 is projected to be saved in just one of the larger hospital's ER."

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East Cooper Medical Center's CEO, Jason Alexander, commented that the data provided positive reinforcement to support the expansion of the program.  "The early data indicate that overall patient wait and treatment times will be reduced by a least 15 percent for all ED patients. That is a significant improvement in patient care that helps underpin plans to expand the system to include clinics and physicians' offices."

To date, each of the hospital systems has supported the program with thousands of donated hours by administrative and technical staffs.

 "When we first saw that our colleagues at Vanderbilt University had set up a health information exchange in Memphis, we believed that we could do the same thing here," said Greenberg. "Thanks to multiple generous grants from The Duke Endowment, and the enthusiastic response from all of the local hospitals, we have been able to achieve a real win for the Charleston community that is sustainable."

The list of participating CeHA emergency departments includes:

- East Cooper Medical Center
- Medical University of South Carolina (3 EDs)
- Roper St. Francis Healthcare (5 EDs)
- Trident Health (2 EDs)
- Naval Health Clinic, Charleston (May 2012)
- Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (Summer 2012)

Today's event included a demonstration of the system in Roper Hospital's emergency department where clinicians rapidly researched information for a patient on site who had previously visited MUSC, with the permission of that patient.
For more information visit: http://www.carolinaehealth.com/.

***About Carolina eHealth Alliance (CeHA)***

*The Carolina eHealth Alliance exists to provide South Carolina citizens with more effective and efficient delivery of healthcare services through networked systems that allow viewing of patient-specific information.  By testing and studying this data exchange across all phase 1 emergency department access points, the participating hospitals will continue to evaluate the benefits of expansion in patient data as well as in health system facilities and geography.  Participating care delivery organizations presently include: MUSC's ED sites at three different hospitals: the main hospital's ED, the new Ashleigh River Tower ED, and the Pediatric Hospital's ED.  Additional sites include: two Roper St. Francis Healthcare ED facilities, and the EDs at Summerville Medical Center, Trident Medical Center, East Cooper Medical Center, as well as the New East Cooper Medical Center.*

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