

Technology Improving Our Lives

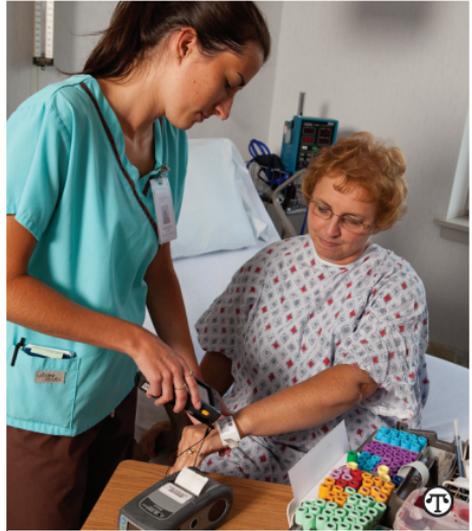
Rural Hospitals Embracing Electronic Health Records

(NAPSA)—The United States health care system is undergoing many notable changes. Among them are the incentives for hospitals to implement electronic health records (EHRs) by 2015. The purpose of this legislation is not to simply move a patient's data from a paper chart to an electronic version, but to use these records in a "meaningful" way: to achieve significant improvements in quality, safety and care coordination.

While some hospitals are working to implement EHRs, many rural and community hospitals have lagged behind large urban and university hospitals. "Understandably, smaller facilities are concerned about the effect steep implementation costs could have on already strained budgets," said John Glaser, Ph.D., CEO, Siemens Healthcare, Health Services Business Unit. "However, it is important for small community hospitals to understand that investing in an EHR system is not only feasible but can help control and reduce costs—two benefits that are especially valuable to providers and patient care."

EHRs help improve efficiencies for both the provider and patient, including:

- More accurate billing and better coordination with insurance companies to reduce costs associated with rework;
- Quicker, more comprehensive access to patient information, helping ensure better care for more patients;
- The possibility to view a patient's history and potentially eliminate duplicate tests, thereby reducing costs and increasing patient satisfaction;



Implementing electronic health records is good for patients and good for hospitals.

• The ability to record patient notes faster with a seamless and uniform EHR throughout the hospital, eliminating the timely steps of the traditional pen-and-paper process.

Smaller facilities can now capitalize on the opportunity of EHRs through funding options and government incentives that make the transition more feasible. Millions of dollars of grant money have already been awarded by the government to support the adoption of EHRs among rural and community hospitals. Additionally, there are solutions available for these hospitals to cut costs, such as turning to medical-grade cloud computing for remote hosting. Remote hosting, for example, allows hospital servers to be maintained by a vendor, thereby reducing the need to hire and train additional IT staff.

Today, smaller facilities can overcome concerns about cost and resources to make EHRs a reality.