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July 16, 2010

New 'meaningful use' final rule clarifies incentive payments for hospitals, healthcare providers

Federal officials have released the final rule on what hospitals and healthcare providers must do to demonstrate "meaningful use" of electronic health records (EHRs) to qualify for federal incentive payments, as well as one describing the required standards and certification criteria for EHR technology. According to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, the meaningful use rule requires physicians to meet 15 objectives and hospitals 14 objectives during the first stage of the incentive program. Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009, eligible professionals may receive as much as \$44,000 under Medicare and \$63,750 under Medicaid, and hospitals may receive millions of dollars under both Medicare and Medicaid, when they adopt certified EHR technology and use it to achieve specified objectives, Sebelius notes. The government expects to issue up to \$27 billion in incentive payments over 10 years, she said. [Full Story](#) [Further Information](#) [Further Information](#)

Non-implanted biomimetic chip could mean new treatment for Parkinson's

A team of international scientists is developing a biomimetic chip that they hope will one day be a viable treatment for Parkinson's disease, depression and age-related brain function impairment. According to Matti Mintz, a professor in Tel Aviv University's Psychobiology Research Unit and a project researcher, the Rehabilitation Nano Chip (ReNaChip) or "brain pacemaker" could be used to wire computer applications and sensors to the brain, building off of current procedures to make those approaches more precise. But instead of being implanted in the brain, the chip itself would be hooked up to tiny electrodes that provide precisely controlled stimulation to diseased areas. The technique would be an improvement over existing neurostimulation methods, which lose their effectiveness over time due to overstimulation of the brain, Mintz said. The research team, which includes scientists from Newcastle University in the U.K.; Lund University in Sweden; Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona; WizSoft, a data-mining software maker based in Israel and the United States; and Guger Technologies, a medical engineering company in Austria, hope to finalize experiments within six months and have the ReNaChip on the market within a few years. [Full Story](#) [Further Information](#)

Home telecare helps patients cope with cancer-related pain and depression

Home-based automated symptom monitoring and telephone-based care management helps cancer patients cope with pain and depression, according to a study by researchers at the Richard Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indiana University, and Regenstrief Institute in Indianapolis. The Indiana Cancer Pain and Depression (INCPAD) trial involved 405 patients suffering from cancer-related pain, depression or both. Almost half—202—were placed in an intervention group that received automated home-based symptom monitoring by interactive voice recording or Internet, and centralized telecare management by a nurse-physician specialist team. After 12 months, 137 patients with pain in the intervention group showed greater improvement in pain symptoms than 137 patients with pain in the usual-care group. The 154 patients with depression in the intervention group had significantly greater improvement in depression severity than the 155 patients with depression in a "usual-care" group. The results show that a collaborative care intervention can cover several conditions, both physical and psychological, according to study lead researcher Dr. Kurt Kroenke. The findings appear in the July 14 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. [Full Story](#) [Further Information](#)

Doctor house calls could make comeback under federal patient care project

Telemedicine may be a growing field, but the good old-fashioned house call is making a comeback as the federal government searches for ways to cope with rising healthcare expenses. According to a report in *The Washington Post*, the recently enacted healthcare overhaul includes a three-year pilot project to test the home-visit concept on 10,000 of the most-ill, most-expensive-to-treat Medicare enrollees. Participants in the Independence at Home project must have multiple chronic conditions and be unable to perform normal daily activities such as bathing and dressing. They must also have been hospitalized or needed other high-cost care in the past year. According to Jim Pyles, a Washington lawyer and member of the board of directors of the American Academy of Home Care Physicians, the project makes financial sense, because it would prevent small physical problems from becoming larger, more-expensive ones. The project is slated for a January 2012 start, but proponents are pushing for an earlier date. [Full Story](#)

Johnson & Johnson buys wireless stroke product maker Micrus for \$480 million

In an effort to expand its presence in the wireless neural implant business, New Brunswick, NJ-based Johnson & Johnson is acquiring San Jose, CA-based stroke treatment device maker Micrus Endovascular Corp. in a cash-for-stock deal worth \$480 million. According to Micrus Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer John Kilcoyne, Micrus Endovascular will join Codman & Shurtleff Inc., the neuro device business of the DePuy Family of Companies within Johnson & Johnson. Michael Mahoney, DePuy Family Company Group chairperson, said the merger is "an important strategic move in the neuro device space for us and a significant step forward in the delivery of technologies for the prevention and treatment of stroke." The boards of directors for Johnson & Johnson and Micrus Endovascular have approved the transaction, but final closure is expected in the second half of 2010. [Full Story](#)

Telefónica opens global e-health unit to curb expenses in Europe, Latin America

Madrid, Spain-based medical technology and global communications firm Telefónica has opened a global e-health unit designed to bring more-efficient, patient-focused healthcare while reducing healthcare expenses. According to Telefónica chairperson César Alierta, telemedicine and remote telecare, and greater network integration through information and communication technologies, represent an opportunity to "optimize resources and budgets, improve productivity and establish an efficient cooperation system between health centers and professionals." Telefónica currently participates in 80 e-health projects in more than nine countries in Spain, Europe and Latin America. The unit plans to become a "standard-bearer in the areas of products, pilot projects and know-how," Alierta said. [Full Story](#)

More than half of all doctors now use EHRs and smartphones

Use of electronic records (EHRs) among doctors continues to grow, with more than half now storing patient information digitally instead of on paper. According to a survey by Knowledge Networks, 52 percent of specialists and 50 percent of primary care physicians maintain EHRs, up from 42 percent and 38 percent, respectively, in 2008. The survey also notes that 62 percent of specialists and 55 percent of primary care physicians have a smartphone, used primarily for access to e-mail and the Internet. The growing popularity of EHRs should also result in a heavier patient load, as doctors will be able to accommodate more patients through more-efficient visits, Knowledge Networks Senior Vice President Jim Vielee said. [Full Story](#)

'AGNES' supplies real-time patient data without video conferencing network

Chelmsford, MA-based AMD Global Telemedicine Inc. has released a system for gathering and distributing patient medical information in real time without use of a video conferencing network. According to AMD Chief Architect John Cambrey, the AGNES Medical Gateway is a Web 2.0-based product that runs under the Windows operating systems, with specialized medical device drivers and customized Web services capable of secure, real-time streaming. Data can be rendered via Microsoft Silverlight or Adobe Air. Traditional telemedicine technology uses videoconferencing equipment to enable doctors to see and hear patient diagnostic information generated by telemedical instruments. The AGNES Gateway "can be leveraged to enrich users' telemedicine Web experience as information is continually requested, consumed and reinterpreted," Cambrey said. [Full Story](#)

CMS Telehealth named MedApps supplier for New Jersey, New York

New York City-based telemedicine services provider CMS Telehealth has been named the official supplier of MedApps Inc.'s Mobile Health Monitoring System with HealthPAL in New York and New Jersey. According to MedApps Chief Executive Officer Kent Dicks, MedApps' wireless remote patient monitoring system can transmit, store and report timely, accurate health information anywhere. The HealthPAL device makes biometric readings collected from retail medical monitors available for remote monitoring by clinicians, family members and other caregivers. Readings can be tracked by individuals through electronic health record (EHR) or personal health record (PHR) services such as Microsoft HealthVault or Google Health. Such a system gives individuals more insight and control over their health, according to CMS Telehealth President Joseph Rabinowitz. [Full Story](#)

Hospitals, healthcare groups awarded \$390.5 million for online disaster planning

States, territories, and large metropolitan areas will receive a total of \$390.5 million in grants from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help hospitals and other healthcare organizations respond to public health and medical impacts of emergencies such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or acts of terrorism by using interoperable communications systems, patient tracking tools and database-registered healthcare professionals. According to HHS, the 2010 Hospital Preparedness Awards will be allocated to all states and U.S. territories, as well as the metropolitan areas of New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. A complete list of grant recipients is available at www.phe.gov/preparedness/planning/hpp/pages/default.aspx. [Full Story](#)

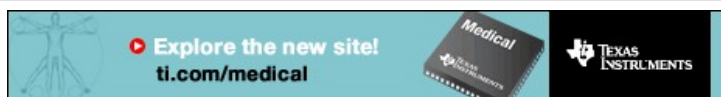
NeoStem receives \$700,000 award from Army telemedicine research center

International biopharmaceutical company NeoStem has been awarded a \$700,000 contract by the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command's Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center to advance adult stem cell therapies in treating traumatic wounds. According to NeoStem Chief Executive Officer Robin Smith, the contract will allow the company to evaluate the use of topically applied bone marrow-derived adult mesenchymal stem cells for rapid wound healing. NeoStem is "thrilled" with the award, Smith said. The company's goal is to "leverage adult stem cell technology to help our soldiers avoid amputations and immobilization from injuries that they may sustain while fighting for our country," he said. [Full Story](#)

Scotland to launch nationwide telehealth pilot for chronically ill

Scotland's National Health Service (NHS) is launching the nation's largest telehealth pilot in an effort to improve lifestyles of those suffering from chronic illnesses. According to Dr. Brian Montgomery, associate medical director at NHS Lothian, the service will use the Intel Health Guide system to provide in-home care for 400 patients with long-term conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cardiac disease and diabetes. The move follows a small-scale pilot in which the system was used to provide services to 30 COPD patients. That pilot demonstrated that patients were extremely positive about their new model of care, particularly in regards to self-monitoring of their condition and remote supervision, Montgomery said. The smaller pilot showed clearly that patients experienced additional reassurance from the personal health system, and they also gained confidence and independence. The larger-scale project should also emphasize the financial benefits of telemedicine, he added. [Full Story](#) [Further Information](#)

Movers & SHAKERS



Colleen Woods, formerly the Chief Information Officer of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, has been appointed as the New Jersey Health IT Coordinator...**Mark Trigsted**, former VP and general manager at McKesson, has been appointed executive vice president of healthcare for Diversinet...**Dev Ittycheria**, formerly president of the Enterprise Service Management division of BMC software, has joined the board of directors of athenahealth...**David Fairbrook** has been appointed president of the user group and chair of ClearPractice's clinical advisory committee...**Jeff Segal**, former CEO of intoPIX of America, has been named CTO of WellAWARE Systems...**Michael Nusimow**, CEO and co-founder of DrChrono.com, announced the release of version 1.5 of its iPad EMR app, which now has the ability to create macros and customize SOAP notes...**Adel Dahmani**, general manager of Cisco Tunisia, and Anthony Vonsee, managing director for Cisco North Africa Levant, announced that Cisco's Tunis office is the first business in Tunisia to offer Cisco's TelePresence exchanges...**Dr. Ricardo P. Ramos**, Chief of the Tarlac Provincial Health Unit (Philippines), announced the Wireless Access for Health project and the National Telehealth Center's Community Health Information Tracking System had completed the pilot phase, performing over 12,000 patient consultations...**Dr. Kevin Friedman, DO**, will be joining Telemedicine Consulting Network, a service provider to InteractiveMD, as Medical Director...[Please send us](#) your news on Movers and Shakers in the field.

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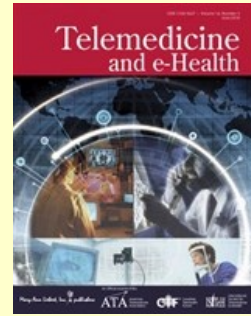
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