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HEALTHeLINK UNVEILS \$16.1 MILLION BEACON COMMUNITY INITIATIVE TO FIGHT DIABETES

Obama Administration, Congressman Higgins, NYS Health Commissioner and CEOs from area hospitals and health plans join effort to fight diabetes through health information technology

BUFFALO, N.Y. – In June 2010, HEALTHeLINK received the largest Beacon Community Award in the United States from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Beacon Project was created to help communities use health information technology to forge cooperation and use resources effectively toward local priority health goals.

HEALTHeLINK was joined today by Dr. David Blumenthal, the point person for the national health information technology initiative, as well as other dignitaries, including Congressman Brian Higgins and New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Richard F. Daines, to unveil details about HEALTHeLINK's \$16.1 million plan to fight the high incidences of diabetes in the Western New York Community through health information technology.

"I would like to congratulate Buffalo and the Western New York community for collaborating to strengthen a clinical information exchange and related care coordination program that exemplifies our aspirations for creating a national health information technology infrastructure aimed at realizing specific health care quality and efficiency goals," said David Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.P., National Coordinator for Health Information Technology under the auspices of HHS.

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"This project is one of several local initiatives that demonstrate how Western New York is leading the way in health innovation," said Congressman Brian Higgins. "We thank Dr. Blumenthal for his interest in this region's efforts to become an early adaptor and we credit local health care leaders who are collaborating through HEALTHeLINK to advance affordable, quality health care delivery in our community and beyond."

"The HEALTHeLINK program is the wave of the future for treating chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, promising enhanced coordinated care for patients in Western New York through the use of health information technology," said New York State Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D. "I applaud the dedication and collaboration of HEALTHeLINK's community partners to launch this important initiative that will help achieve better health outcomes for patients and serve as a national model for advancing health IT."

HEALTHeLINK must fulfill various outcomes as required in the Beacon award, including demonstrating cost savings as measured by a 5 percent reduction in visits to the emergency room, a 5 percent reduction in hospitalizations for ambulatory care and a 5 percent reduction in 30 day readmission rates for diabetic patients. Another outcome is to increase pneumococcal vaccinations and annual seasonal influenza vaccination rates by 10 percent using electronic health record alerts and prompts for individuals with diabetes.

"The growing incidence of diabetes in Western New York and across the country is staggering and the Beacon Community Award will help in battling this debilitating disease with improved care coordination and new resources available through the HEALTHeLINK network," said Michael W. Cropp, M.D., president and CEO, Independent Health and HEALTHeLINK chairman. "Our unprecedented level of collaboration between physicians, health plans and hospitals to improve the quality of health care in our community was a critical factor in receiving this grant. Sustainable solutions to fixing health care locally and nationally require a collective responsibility. We're proud to be recognized by the Obama administration for our efforts and encourage all area physicians to join the HEALTHeLINK network to help continue improving the quality of health care for all Western New Yorkers."

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“The Beacon Community Program award to HEALTHeLINK is recognition of the promise of technology to enhance health care for those living with diabetes.” said Peter Knappen, director, American Diabetes Association, Western New York. “We are extremely excited to be part of this initiative for our community.”

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About the Beacon Community Program

The \$235 million Beacon Community Program was created last year under the Health Information Technology Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, enacted last year by Congress and President Obama, as part of a battery of new activities to support the nation’s transition from paper-based medical records to electronic health records (EHR). A total of 17 selected Beacon communities will pioneer to use of health information technology tools to focus community-wide efforts on specific health targets that are most important for each community. Beacon communities will also provide learning and lessons for other communities as they adopt and employ health information technology. For more information please visit <http://healthit.hhs.gov>.

About HEALTHeLINK

HEALTHeLINK, the Western New York Clinical Information Exchange, is a collaborative effort among various organizations to share clinical information in efficient and meaningful ways to improve the delivery of care, enhance clinical outcomes, and help control healthcare costs throughout the region. The not-for-profit organization was established through funding from The Catholic Health System, Erie County Medical Center Corporation, HealthNow New York (BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York), Independent Health Association, Kaleida Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Univera Healthcare and the Health Care Efficiency and Affordability Law for New Yorkers Capital Grant Program (HEAL NY) from New York State. HEALTHeLINK also received the country’s largest grant as part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services’ Beacon Community Cooperative Agreement Program. HEALTHeLINK stakeholders include a broad representation of healthcare professionals and organizations throughout the eight-county Western New York region such as the Buffalo Academy of Medicine (BAM), Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH), State University of New York at Buffalo and the WNY R-AHEC (Rural Area Health Education Center.) For more information about HEALTHeLINK please visit www.wnyhealthelink.com.