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**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:** September 8, 2011

**Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) First to Create and Launch  
Statewide Direct Adoption Program**

*RIQI's Regional Extension Center to help all RI providers send secure messages with  
sensitive patient health information via Direct*

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND—The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality, safety and value of healthcare in Rhode Island, announced today the launch of its Statewide Direct Adoption Program. RIQI's Regional Extension Center is the first of the 62 RECs nationwide to create a program focused on helping providers understand and adopt Direct Messaging, a simple, secure and cost-effective way for sending patients' protected health information (PHI) directly to known, trusted recipients over the Internet.

Direct Messaging is secure email messaging that allows providers the ability to safely and securely send information to other providers, specialists or hospitals that have a Direct email account. By using an industry-standard technical infrastructure and legal framework, Direct Messaging ensures sensitive information is transported securely and delivered correctly.

"Direct Messaging will improve patient care and increase coordination between health care providers," said U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, who founded RIQI during his time as Attorney General. "Today's announcement is another notable achievement for RIQI and Rhode Island that will help keep our state at the forefront of the effort to improve quality and lower costs in the healthcare system."

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As a result of RIQI's relationship and work with Aquidneck Medical Associates and Newport Hospital, the two entities used Direct Messaging to exchange critical information prior to a patient's ER admittance . The patient had visited Aquidneck Medical Associates complaining of numbness in her arm. She was triaged by the nurse who immediately sent her to Newport Hospital's ED. While the patient was en route to the hospital, the nurse created an industry-standard CCD (Continuity of Care Document) and sent it to the hospital via Direct Messaging prior to the patient's arrival, such that the hospital had all of the patient's most up-to-date health information for treating her immediately.

Newport Hospital logged into its Direct account, opened the relevant message and attachments, and accessed the patient's record and previous history, important to providing the patient with the most complete care. Once the patient was discharged, Newport Hospital used Direct Messaging to electronically send back an updated CCD for the patient to Aquidneck Medical Associates. The nurse reviewed the information, added it to the patient's electronic health record, and then followed up with the patient to establish a plan for her care.

Direct Messaging is the foundational technology for several other RIQI initiatives which will help to improve continuity of patient care through improved communication. RIQI and Cumberland Primary Care recently completed a pilot project to connect the practice's EHR with currentcare, Rhode Island's Health Information Exchange. Through an automated process, clinical data for consented patients is sent via a Direct Message from the EHR to currentcare, where it is added to the patient's longitudinal health record. As part of its Beacon initiative, RIQI will soon launch a service to notify Primary Care Providers via Direct Messaging when their patients are admitted or discharged from the hospital.

"Today's announcement is extremely significant with respect to the work RIQI is involved with on a national level as well as a local level," commented Gary Christensen, COO & CIO at RIQI. "Many EHR vendors throughout the United States are working toward incorporating Direct Messaging into their products. In the future, EHRs will be able to seamlessly communicate with EHRs at other practices. Direct Messaging is clearly going to be a foundational component for helping to improve and change healthcare, as we know it."

Direct Messaging is also a potentially significant tool for those practices preparing to attest to Stage 1 Meaningful Use of their EHR by satisfying Core Measure 14 – Electronic Exchange of Clinical Information.

"We are pleased with the progress Rhode Island Quality Institute has made in helping healthcare providers in the State of Rhode Island demonstrate meaningful use of electronic health records through its Direct adoption program," commented Farzad Mostashari, MD, ScM, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology within the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "As ONC continues the work to establish governance for the Nationwide Health Information Network, RIQI's work in establishing statewide information exchange is very significant."

In addition to ensuring that a message travels securely, Direct Messaging also validates that messages are delivered to the intended recipient. To help Rhode Island providers set up and manage their trusted contacts with whom they exchange PHI using Direct Messaging, RIQI has established the Rhode Island Trust Community (RITC), a community of verified Rhode Island providers. RITC membership is available and free to all RI REC members and provides a number of value-added services including education opportunities and technology support.

To set up a Direct Messaging account or to learn more about Direct Messaging and the Rhode Island Trust Community, please visit [www.DocEHRtalk.org](http://www.DocEHRtalk.org), call 888-858-4815, ext. 5, or email [directprogram@riqi.org](mailto:directprogram@riqi.org)

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***About the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI)***

*Founded in 2001, the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) is a collaboration of leaders in the Rhode Island community who share the intent to substantively improve the healthcare system in the state. The collaboration includes CEOs of hospitals, health insurers, and businesses, along with leaders of consumer groups, academia, and government. RIQI's mission is to significantly improve the quality, safety, and value of health care in Rhode Island. RIQI is the Governor-designated sole Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) for Rhode Island, chosen to coordinate the statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE). As the RHIO, RIQI is charged with bringing together health care stakeholders within the state and governing HIE among them for the purpose of improving health outcomes in the community. For more information, visit [www.RIQI.org](http://www.RIQI.org).*