

# **CONNECTING FOR HEALTH**<sup>SM</sup>

**MARKLE FOUNDATION**      *A Public-Private Collaborative*

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## **PROTOTYPE FOR A NATIONWIDE HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE TO BE LAUNCHED BY *CONNECTING FOR HEALTH***

**Common values and common technical standards at the heart of effort to enable sharing of  
health information in California, Massachusetts, and Indiana**

**New York, NY (June 1, 2005)** – *Connecting for Health*, a public-private collaborative of more than 100 diverse organizations, announced today that it is launching the first-ever prototype of an electronic national health information exchange or “health information-sharing environment,” based on common, open standards. This effort is the first step in enabling patients and authorized physicians in all 50 states and DC to share important, even life-saving, personal health information on a completely voluntary basis in a secure and private manner.

Managed by the Markle Foundation and funded by both Markle and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, this initiative will allow authorized users of three very different health information networks located in California, Massachusetts, and Indiana to share health information both within and among these local regions and communities.

“Patients and their physicians must be able to send and receive vital medical information at a moment’s notice, if we are to improve the quality of health care, reduce medical errors, lower costs, and empower patients to take an active role in making health care decisions that affect them and those they love,” said Carol Diamond, MD, MPH, managing director of the Markle Foundation and chair of *Connecting for Health*. “We believe there is no one-size-fits-all solution to sharing electronic health information. This prototype is a very pragmatic step in developing the national health information environment we all desire.”

This new experiment, enabling the exchange of information both within and among local communities, will serve as a laboratory for the Common Framework developed by *Connecting for Health* in 2004. This framework offers a set of policy principles, guidelines, and technical specifications to facilitate the electronic sharing of medical information among authorized individuals and institutions, while protecting privacy and securing personal information. Two *Connecting for Health* working groups, consisting of experts in health policy, clinical medicine, and information technology, developed the framework through a yearlong collaborative effort.

The Common Framework provides that any prototype must:

- guarantee that patients and their authorized health professionals jointly make decisions regarding the sharing of health information;
- store information about individual patients in the electronic files of the health professionals and institutions responsible for patient care, as well as in each individual patient's own records, and not in centralized national or regional databases;
- create nationwide capability for health information exchange using the Internet, not a new network;
- facilitate communication among numerous, disparate information networks and diverse communities; and
- allow for diversity in software and hardware that can participate in the system.

“We are on the cusp of a new era in improving health care for all Americans in a way that respects the desires of individuals for both high-quality medical care and personal privacy,” said John Lumpkin, MD, MPH, senior vice president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and vice chair of *Connecting for Health*. “The launch of this prototype will demonstrate for the first time that it is both possible and preferable to create a nationwide network that allows patients to control the flow of their personal health information and make informed decisions with their doctors about their own care.”

“This new effort will inform government, consumers, and the private sector about immediate steps to achieve improvements in health care quality and efficiency through information sharing and information technology,” said Zoë Baird, president of the Markle Foundation.

With new support of more than \$1.9 million from both the Markle Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, local teams in Boston, Indianapolis, and Mendocino will work with one another and with *Connecting for Health* to launch the prototype networks. Despite the diversity of technology options within each region's health network and the differing social and economic profiles of each community, this effort will facilitate the secure, authorized, and private exchange of health information. The local efforts will produce additional tools and techniques for sending, receiving, and viewing medical data by authorized participants, which will be of tremendous use to policymakers, local communities, and vendors. *Connecting for Health's* total operating budget, since it was founded in 2001, is \$5.3 million.

“Boston has long been a center of electronic health record innovation, and we have developed a local health information network to make the best care available to all who live or visit here. Now, with the support of *Connecting for Health* and two national foundations, we are ready to link our network with two very different communities in other parts of the United States,” said John Halamka, MD, chief information officer for CareGroup HealthCare System and an emergency physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. “As an emergency physician, I am confident that an interconnected electronic health care system will save tens of thousands of lives each year by enabling clinicians to retrieve the complete medical histories of critically ill patients in a matter of seconds and thus avoid major medical errors.”

“Mendocino County is three hours north of San Francisco. By testing the *Connecting for Health* prototype, the Mendocino SHARE demonstration project enables small rural sites to securely exchange chronic disease clinical data,” said Will Ross, a project manager with Redwood MedNet in Ukiah, California. “Our local health care information-sharing network can connect public health institutions, private practices, community clinics, and small rural hospitals. The Open Health Records Exchange solution we are using saves taxpayer dollars and helps improve care for our neighbors by adapting to the modern mobility of patients,” he added. “Our rural safety-net clinics provide care to any patient regardless of ability to pay. Sites providing care to low-income families must have access to the new national health information network, and both we and *Connecting for Health* are committed to showing that it can be done.”

“By building on the Indiana Network for Patient Care, our established health information exchange, the *Connecting for Health* prototype will greatly advance development of a national health information network. Given the current burden of chronic illness and the aging of the population, our patients desperately need us to have access to comprehensive, well integrated clinical data, and health information exchange is the only way to provide that access,” said J. Marc Overhage, MD, PhD, senior investigator at the Regenstrief Institute and president and CEO of the Indiana Health Information Exchange. “We support this model because it is pluralistic, it respects communities and individuals, and it will allow us to deliver the best medicine available today.”

*Connecting for Health's* plan to establish the prototype for a national health information-sharing environment has attracted broad-based support from numerous organizations, including dozens of private sector partners. “*Connecting for Health's* effort to create three local, operational, and interoperable health information-sharing communities promises to move the market in the right direction. Private-sector innovation will flourish, as these local efforts lead to the creation of a nationwide health information-sharing environment,” said Dan Garrett, vice president and managing partner of Global Health Solutions for Computer Sciences Corporation. “As the development and utilization of the Internet has proved, open, non-proprietary standards and solutions are key to innovation and, most importantly, adoption. We firmly believe such a nationwide health information-sharing environment will enable the health care industry to deliver safer and more cost-effective service to patients and to be a key component in transforming the industry.”

### **About *Connecting for Health***

*Connecting for Health* is committed to accelerating the development of a health information-sharing environment by bringing together an array of private, public, and not-for-profit groups to develop common standards and values. *Connecting for Health* also works to overcome the technical, financial, and policy barriers to bringing health care into the information age. As one of its first steps, *Connecting for Health* convened a group of leading government, industry, and health care experts, who have shaped and led the national debate on electronic clinical data standards. The group forged consensus on the adoption of an initial set of standards, developed case studies on privacy and security, and helped define the electronic personal health record. For more information, visit [www.connectingforhealth.org](http://www.connectingforhealth.org).

**About the Markle Foundation:** Emerging information and communication technologies possess enormous potential to improve people's lives. The Markle Foundation works to realize this potential by accelerating the use of these technologies to address critical public needs, particularly in the areas of health and national security. The Markle Foundation's overarching goal in the health area is to accelerate the rate at which information technology enables consumers and the health system that supports them to improve health and health care. The Foundation's goal is to ensure that the extraordinary potential of 21<sup>st</sup>-century information technology to improve the health and health care of each citizen is translated into everyday use as quickly and effectively as possible. For more information, see [www.markle.org](http://www.markle.org).

**About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful, and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. Helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in our lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).