



REDWOOD MEDNET

Electronic health info exchange test to start

25 doctors in 2-county area agree to participate

By **BEN BROWN**
The Daily Journal

Redwood MedNet is ready to begin the initial test of its Web-based clinical message service that will allow physicians in Mendocino and Lake counties to easily and securely share important patient documents.

“Our goal is to have in place a viable electronic message system that allows rural physicians to receive results from laboratories and to send clinical data to one another to improve patient care,” said President of Redwood MedNet Dr. Carl Henning.

Of the 200 Mendocino and Lake County doctors surveyed by Redwood MedNet in January, 25

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Elusive Images photo contest

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\$1 tax included

The Ukiah

Mendocino County's local newspaper



Monday: Clouds mixed with sun

Tuesday: Partly sunny and pleasant

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have agreed to be part of the trial that Redwood MedNet board secretary Will Ross said will test the software and iron out any remaining bugs in the system.

Currently, local doctors send and receive lab results and other documents via fax machine because their records are not yet electronic, Ross said.

In the short run, that will not change, but establishing a secure Web messaging service will help facilitate a switch to electronic records, Ross said.

“We’re building the type of infrastructure for that,” he

said.

System tests will be complete before the end of the year, Ross said. After that, Redwood MedNet will start hooking up practices to the network.

“We’re anticipating we’ll be able to hook up one practice per week after that,” Ross said.

Web-based clinical message services are already common in urban areas such as Santa Cruz, Cincinnati and New York. Henning said he believes a clinical messaging service can be even more important in a rural area than in an urban one.

“The absence of large, integrated health systems in rural areas requires an innovative approach to improve diagno-

sis and treatment in rural patients,” Henning said. “We believe our message service will address this need.”

“The question we have been funded by Blue Shield to answer is ‘what is the business model for a rural area,’” Ross said.

Some of the money to fund Redwood MedNet’s clinical messaging project comes from a grant from Blue Shield of California.

Each year, Blue Shield awards \$30 million in grants to efforts to expand access to health coverage, end domestic violence and advance the use of technology to improve access to quality health care.

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