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News Release



MONTANA CHOSEN FOR NATIONAL HEALTHCARE PILOT PROJECT

STATE LEADS NATION BY TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE DELIVERY SYSTEM THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

CITY OF BILLINGS, EBMS EMPLOYEES TO BE PILOT PROJECT PIONEERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BILLINGS, MONT. – Montana once again is establishing a pioneering legacy by leading the nation in transforming the healthcare delivery system through cutting-edge technology innovation, thanks to a unique collaborative link formed between Montana and national industries, in partnership with state and federal government.

Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer and U.S. Senator Max Baucus both praised these efforts, which earned Montana the top spot in a national consumer healthcare innovation pilot project that gives patients and their multiple providers an unprecedented opportunity to electronically access and manage in tandem, personal healthcare information for patients and their families. Baucus, a longtime proponent of improving health-information sharing, brought healthcare leaders together in 2000 with his health information task force, which laid the foundation for this innovative effort.

This first step in Montana's healthcare delivery progress begins in the state's largest city, as the nation's eyes turn toward the employees of the **City of Billings** and employees from **EBMS**, a Montana company headquartered in Billings that, through over three decades of proactive

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innovation, has become a national healthcare industry leader. Together, these pioneering employees and their families will form the model for what will go down in healthcare history books as the pilot case, where health information technology brings together each patient's health data, from all provider sources, into one safe and secure online information repository, so that everyone caring for that patient, and the patient's family, is on the same page, not pages.

Through this pilot project, City of Billings and EBMS employees will become empowered and enabled to reshape the way they and their healthcare providers communicate between themselves and others of the patient's choosing. Patients may choose to share all or part of their data with some or all of their healthcare providers. No one will have access to any of their information, including their employers, without the patient's express permission; and, regardless of changing jobs or life circumstances, the patient's health information will be theirs for life. The patient will have instant access, from any computer, to their and their family's healthcare information, 24/7, 365 days a year.

The pilot project is a result of a "Consumer Innovation Challenge," initiated by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In March 2012, the ONC requested proposals for innovative ideas to improve the delivery of healthcare through technology. Six states received notice of funding, but it was **Montana that seized the lead with its proposal to upgrade the healthcare system and bring it into the 21st century digital age by freeing healthcare consumers from the confines of a paper world and increasing their access to their personal health information through the use of technology.**

Because of the opportunity provided in Montana's proposal, healthcare consumers now will have an online healthcare information site for themselves and their families, and can throw aside the shoeboxes full of disparate medical records that many of us have schlepped year after year, from provider to provider, hoping that someday, we could do it all online. That someday has arrived.

"Today, it's commonplace to access your banking information, brokerage information, insurance information and more, online," said Brad Putnam, director of HealthShare Montana, a partner in the pilot project. "Unfortunately, consumer electronic access to their healthcare information has not made similar progress. It is one of the last areas to come into the digital age. Through the pilot partnership of EBMS, HealthShare Montana, Rocky Mountain Health Network, Dossia, the ONC and HeW, consumers will have easy access to this information through a user-friendly portal. What this means for the patient is direct access to healthcare information previously unavailable from a single place, if available at all. For people with chronic conditions, the benefits will be immediate and immense. They will have access to an electronic health record that will follow them wherever they go, can be sent to a new physician or specialist prior to a visit, used to order prescriptions, and can be used to take an active part in managing their own health. This is the first step in moving society from reacting to our health to actively managing our health.

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Such economy of effort will **save more than just time, it will save lives**. Having instant access to information, when minutes count, can mean the difference between life and death.

When considering the hundreds of proposals, ONC Information Exchange Policy Director Lee Stevens knew immediately they had a clear winner in Montana.

“Montana is the first state to take on a healthcare challenge that, through technology, can make such a vast, immediate impact on people’s lives, and can provide the opportunity for healthcare innovation that will benefit our entire country,” said Stevens. “I cannot emphasize enough how proud Montanans should be of this. They are forging a path for the entire nation to follow, and it begins in Billings.”

In describing the importance of Montana’s project, Stevens used himself as an example: “When I read Montana’s pilot proposal, I knew immediately how critical this project could be to everyone, including myself. My mother passed at a fairly young age from leukemia and a complex set of complications that were incredibly difficult to manage. This first raised my awareness of the need for health information technology and the electronic exchange of healthcare information. I currently am trying to assist my aging father with his own complex healthcare needs.” Lee said he understands the helplessness and frustration people feel as caregivers to family members and others, searching for health information they need to make informed decisions and getting nowhere in that search. They know the information is somewhere; they just don’t know where. He said an initiative like the Montana project would have provided him with immeasurable relief from the stress he experienced.

Stevens joined Governor Schweitzer and Senator Baucus by giving the highest of marks to these pilot project partners:

- **EBMS** is Montana’s premier strategic healthcare company that designs holistic solutions to improve the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, organizations and communities. Through customized plan design, data analytics, health management programs, and a dedicated team of health and business strategists who work collaboratively to achieve better health for the organization’s workforce and improved financial outcomes for its fiscal bottom line, EBMS offers a full suite of health management services, including onsite clinics, wellness programs, disease management and medical management programs, as well as the tools and information necessary for members to improve their health and get the best quality and value-care possible. Founded 32 years ago by Park City, Montana natives Rick and Nicki Larson, EBMS now has over 300 employees at the Billings corporate headquarters and regional offices in Portland and Denver, with client groups in every U.S. state.
- **Dossia**, EBMS’ corporate partner, is a leading national health management system provider that serves as an advocate on behalf of healthcare consumers for health information-enabling technology. The pilot project’s portal, leading the City of Billings and EBMS

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employees to their personal online electronic information sites, will be powered by Dossia. This employer-led organization is dedicated to improving health and healthcare in America by empowering individuals to make good health decisions and becoming more discerning healthcare consumers.

- **HealthShare Montana** is a nonprofit statewide initiative with a mission to support, promote and encourage the electronic exchange of secure and reliable healthcare information, with the goal of improving healthcare for Montanans. HSM is run by a staff, with oversight by a board of directors comprising members from state government, industry, consumer groups, healthcare facilities and providers.
- **Rocky Mountain Health Network**, in Billings, is a physician hospital organization that helps healthcare providers work more effectively by providing tools for controlling healthcare costs and improving healthcare delivery. RMHN has taken a national leadership role in the healthcare industry by bringing forward an envisioning message to healthcare organizations, nationwide, of methods to reduce costs and to improve the quality of healthcare throughout the country.
- **HeW** serves as a bridge between patient knowledge and healthcare organizations, providers and other channel partners, to form a communications gateway leading to increased customer services and operational efficiencies. In Montana's pilot project, HeW will be at the intersection, connecting services between the partners.

“This is a great step forward for Montana families and our healthcare providers,” said U.S. Senator Max Baucus, who helped spearhead HealthShare Montana with his health information task force. “The more our doctors and nurses are working together and sharing information throughout the state, the better off our patients will be. We Montanans are outdoors people. We work hard and like to spend our free time exploring Big Sky Country. This effort means that if someone from Billings needs medical attention while they're in Glacier Park, they'll be in better shape because their healthcare providers will be on the same page.”

Dr. Paul Cook, president and CEO of project partner Rocky Mountain Health Network, is a physician who sees the pilot project from the perspective of a provider. From his vantage point and from every angle he looks, the benefit possibilities this project presents are enormous. Cook said he views the traditional face-to-face interaction between patient and physician as “sacred,” and emphasized that the value of this will not change; rather, he said, it will be improved through the electronic information exchange: “A patient may only visit his/her physician once or twice a year, at best. What outcomes may we rationally expect from a 10- to 15-minute encounter? What happens during the rest of the year? How may we expect a patient to manage his/her health? It is only through the electronic information exchange among providers and patients that we may hope to improve patients' participation in their health; and, ideally, in improving health outcomes. This exchange of information, and the empowerment of patients with the knowledge they need to

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manage their health, now are possible through the leveraging of patient-centric information systems like what will be provided in this pilot project. Now, a patient may become directly involved in the care team. Now, health management is a 24/7, 365 proposition and not a 10-minute encounter. Now, we will create true health reform.”

This ambitious pilot project “seeks to engage and empower patients to become active partners in their healthcare management through every stage of their lives,” said Kirsten Mailloux, EBMS vice president of information services and network management, and an early advocate of the pilot project. “Providing a complete picture of a patient’s medical history at every age, rather than screen shots from select ages in a person’s life, is vital to effectively managing their health and wellbeing,” she said, adding that managing healthcare through the rearview mirror never has been a prescription for success, noting that “vision of hindsight” is what the pilot project will serve to correct.

“In addition to making access to health information easy for patients and their families, we want to be proactive by helping to keep patients healthy, preempting the need for hospital stays and emergency room visits,” said EBMS President Kevin Larson. “The project goal is to give a unified voice to a person’s plan of care, in one online site, where information no longer is fragmented, and patients become the center of their healthcare management in collaboration with their providers, who can communicate with each other to strategize on a cohesive, integrated plan of care. This care-network team guides the patient through the appropriate continuum of care, much like our health coaches at EBMS. No more duplication. No more confusion. No more guessing about what has been done and what needs to be done. The key strategy is coordination and collaboration to engage patients and their providers to plan together, as a team, providing collective guidance and ensuring actions are carried out as prescribed. In the past, this was but a vision of the future. Because of this pilot project, the future has arrived.”

Billings Mayor Tom Hanel is excited that employees in his city will be the first to see this model in action: “The advanced technology offered through this pilot project is a life-changer. For the parent whose child is at a sporting competition in another city, gets hurt and ends up in the emergency room, electronic information sharing will allow instant collaboration between the providers in that city with the parents and the child’s hometown providers. Having instant access to the child’s health information is more than just convenient; it can mean the difference between short-term healing and long-term consequences. The same for people with chronic diseases, or those who need prescriptions filled, or doctors’ appointments scheduled. The flexibility this system offers will change all our lives for the better; and, to have such positive change begin in Billings brings this improved world of communication to our front door.”

To celebrate Montana being the nation’s leader in consumer healthcare innovation, Governor Schweitzer has invited civic, corporate and healthcare leaders to a kick-off event on Friday,

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September 28, at 10:30 a.m., in St. Vincent Healthcare's Marillac Hall, in Billings. The event will highlight the pilot project partners, with a demonstration of the unprecedented opportunities the project presents.

"I'm proud that Montana is taking the lead in designing innovative strategies to improve healthcare in Montana," said Governor Schweitzer. "It's cost-saving innovations like these that will serve as a model to help other states in the future."

For more information about the September 28 kick-off event, or about the pilot project, call Shelley Van Atta at EBMS, (406) 869-6543; or, email her at svanatta@ebms.com.

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