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21 Manning hospital joining statewide tele-medical network

Manning Regional Healthcare Center is being connected to the Iowa Rural Healthcare Telecommunications Program.

The program has 82 Iowa hospitals in 84 locations. With guidance from the Iowa Hospital Association, the hospitals are working toward elimination of geographical restrictions through the design and implementation of the most comprehensive tele-medicine network in the Upper Midwest.

The network, which is utilizing and adding to the current Iowa Communications Network, will allow Manning Regional Healthcare Center connections to other hospitals in the state for the secure and reliable transmission of healthcare records; remote access to specialists or for consultations; access to healthcare networks and groups on the system; video, voice and web conferencing; and transmittal of high-resolution imagery.

The hospital is being connected to the network by way of fiber-optic cable being run from the ICN point at Des Moines Area Community College in Carroll.

"Through the Iowa Rural Healthcare Telecommunications Program, Manning Regional Healthcare Center and other Iowa hospitals have become partners in the advancement of interoperation communication," said MRHC administrator Angela Johnson. "Participation in this program will enhance our future ability to exchange health information electronically and complement the quality of care we deliver to our patients."

According to a report by the Joint Advisory Committee on Communications Capabilities of Emergency Medical and Public Health Care Facilities, the process, which began in 2008, will address the need for safe, reliable and secure transmittal of protected, private data as well as access to the most up-to-date information



Angela Johnson
MRHC
Administrator

and tools.

"Too often today, EMS responders, doctors, and nurses must practice 21st century medicine with 20th century technology," the report said.

For example, the system will allow users to transmit medical testing imagery in seconds when it now takes 20 to 30 minutes to transmit the same over standard DSL connections.

By updating to the existing ICN fiber optic technologies, the consolidation of telecommunications between healthcare facilities, including emergency responders, will be secure regardless of weather or any other disastrous conditions since the electronics are not hanging on telephone or utility lines and are backed by independent power generators in case of power interruptions.

The ICN network is also the most cost-effective method of creating such a diverse network. Unlike commercial





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broadband carriers, the cost for use of the ICN is limited by Iowa law to cost recovery only for the ICN.

The real benefit, however, is not necessarily to the facilities and end users.

“The benefit to the patient in terms of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of their health information is immense,” said Donna Forman, registered health information administrator and privacy officer at Manning. “This system offers the protection of transmitting patient health information over a system not vulnerable to the risks inherent with using the internet-standard DSL connection.”

“The real benefit is to the patient,” said Art Spies, senior vice president of membership services for the Iowa Hospital Association. “Current information is shared among providers in the ability to quickly transfer large image files, to provide tele-health services and to transmit medical record information.”

The \$11.7 million budget for the statewide project includes \$7.7 million for fiber connections with Iowa hospitals. The connections are expected to be completed at the end of 2011.