



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Information Exchange to Test Unique Patient Identifiers

LONG BEACH, CA (May 31, 2011) – The Western Health Information Network (WHIN) has received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio for a pilot project to test how unique patient identifiers can increase patient control over their clinical information and improve the quality of medical records. The pilot project will involve issuing personal identifiers using the Voluntary Universal Healthcare Identifier (VUHID) system provided by Global Patient Identifiers, Inc. (GPII). VUHID allows participating providers to more accurately identify patients' and access healthcare records at the time of the visit.

The grant was awarded to a collaboration between WHIN, a regional health information organization serving Southern California, and GPII, a Tucson-based non-profit company focused on a single healthcare identifier solution. "One of the thorniest problems in our healthcare system is correctly identifying all the records for a given patient across the community. It's critical to protect a patient's privacy but it's essential that we know as much about a patient as we can in order to deliver safe and effective care. We are hopeful that WHIN and GPII's work on patient identity will deliver important benefits in healthcare. This is very much in line with our mission to support innovations that improve the health and health care of all Americans," said Albert O. Shar, Vice President with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"There are a number of niches where the lack of accurate patient identification is causing big problems for our healthcare system – increasing the possibility of medical errors and unnecessary testing. We think that by improving the accuracy of patient identification, which will lead to giving patients more control over the privacy of their information, we can make great strides toward resolving these issues," said Barry Hieb, MD, GPII Chief Scientist.

"We've looked at these kinds of problems, particularly as represented by parents of children with special needs," says Laura Landry, WHIN's executive director. "Their children often have a large team of doctors that handle different aspects of their child's care, so these parents often carry bulging folders of medical records between doctor visits to ensure the health information from previous visits is available to their current doctor. They would love to have a way to ensure that all their kid's doctors are on the same page. Of course, all healthcare consumers will benefit from using unique identifiers to ensure that records from previous visits are accurately linked so that clinicians have a complete picture of the patient's health profile," Ms. Landry went on to say.

The project was officially started in mid-April and is expected to continue into mid-2012, by which time WHIN and GPII will determine and quantify the benefits and challenges of unique identifiers among a population of patients in the Los Angeles area.

May 31, 2011



About WHIN

Established in 2003 as the Long Beach Network for Health and renamed the Western Health Information Network (WHIN) in 2009, WHIN was formed to address significant barriers to health information exchange - legal, technical, and cultural, in the Southern California region. Having developed their legal and technical infrastructure, and with a focus on the ARRA HITECH-funded incentives, WHIN has established the health information technology and exchange framework for the Long Beach community to support healthcare delivery and enable patient information to be safely and securely available anywhere the patient allows it to be viewed. Web site: www.whinit.org

About GPII

GPII is a non-profit corporation, dedicated to the deployment and support the VUHID system as a unique, efficient method to support patient identity management and enhanced privacy protections. This is increasingly important as the proliferation of regional health information organizations (RHIOs) and health information exchanges (HIEs) presents the opportunity to evaluate practical solutions to the challenges of a single patient identifier. VUHID is based on ASTM International standards and reflects GPII's position that a voluntary, universal patient identifier is essential to achieve high quality, low cost healthcare in the United States. Web site: www.gpii.info

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pioneer Portfolio

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and healthcare issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and healthcare of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. Projects in the Pioneer Portfolio are future-oriented and look beyond conventional thinking to explore solutions at the cutting edge of health and healthcare. For more information, visit our website at www.rwjf.org/pioneer.

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