

THE DAILY RECORD

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EstatePLANNING

Why you, and your clients, should sign up for Rochester RHIO

If you haven't signed up for it, or if you haven't advised your clients to, YOU SHOULD.

The Rochester Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) is a resource that provides a secure online health information exchange platform. It gives authorized health care providers access to up-to-date medical information including test and lab results, radiology reports, medical history and insurance eligibility. There is no cost for using the service as it was originally state and federally funded and now has its own sustainable business model.

What is the service area for RHIO?

Rochester RHIO currently connects 38 health care organizations in 13 counties including Monroe and its surrounding counties, as well as Wyoming, Yates, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Alleghany and Chemung counties.

The participating organizations include hospitals, radiology practices, EMS providers, community health centers, insurance companies, reference labs, elder-care agencies, physicians and behavioral health clinics. Only the authorized health care providers to whom the patient gives consent may view the medical information.

What are the benefits to using RHIO?

If consent is given through RHIO, the treating emergency doctor has immediate access to patients' records, which may include medical history, allergies, recent test results and other relevant medical information. This is especially helpful/critical in emergency situations in which the EMT or emergency room doctor has no prior knowledge of the patient. The RHIO database enables medical professionals to provide faster, more accurate medical care based upon the patient's medical history.

The results of using RHIO should include fewer lab tests, fewer mistakes because of lost records, poor handwriting and miscommunication, as well as avoidance of allergic reactions and drug interactions. In addition, the electronic prescribing feature automatically warns the prescriber of any potential drug

interactions.

RHIO can also increase the ease with which second opinions are given since the diagnostician has all the information readily available to make an informed decision. This will be exceedingly valuable for medical services rendered out of town and, eventually, out of state.

What is the Patient Portal?

The Patient Portal provides entrance to the RHIO database as a secure method to enroll in the program. To participate, a user/patient must provide basic personal information as well as information that provides patient security. The process of creating a Patient Portal account is similar and as secure as setting up an online banking account.

What is the electronic prescription program?

Many area pharmacies accept electronic prescriptions. Participating pharmacies include Wegmans, Rite Aid, CVS, Walgreens and others. The ordering software "provides a warning if the dosage appears wrong, if there may be an adverse reaction with other drugs you (the patient) are taking, or other potential problems." The electronic prescription is then sent to the pharmacy to be filled.

What information is shared?

Once consent is given, a participating patient is not able to choose what information is included and what information is excluded. Medical history will include, but is not restricted to, alcohol and drug abuse problems; birth control and abortion; genetic diseases or tests; HIV/AIDS; mental health conditions; and sexually transmitted disease.

Patients are not able to include and exclude certain results for privacy reasons or in an attempt not to expose such information to an insurance agency. The purpose of RHIO is to maintain the integrity of the entire health file. In addition, once information is added, RHIO will not purge the file of information, even if



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such information is old or outdated.

Can a Health Care Proxy and Living Will be electronically uploaded?

Once a patient has created an account on the Patient Portal, the patient may attach an Advance Directive, including a Health Care Proxy and/or a Living Will. Any such advance directive must first be converted to pdf format to be properly uploaded to the RHIO network. Once uploaded, the advance directives will remain on file with RHIO, even if a new document is uploaded. The purpose is to preserve the proper history and entirety of the medical file.

Is RHIO secure?

Yes. Rochester RHIO has been designed to avoid attacks by "hackers" because it does not provide an information database, rather RHIO is a secure way for medical providers to electronically exchange information with one another. RHIO utilizes the most advanced information safeguards such as encryption, tracking ability and password protection. A Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (or HIPAA) compliance panel reviews all security measures to make sure RHIO conforms to HIPAA privacy laws and safeguards for protecting patient privacy.

Prior to RHIO, when medical providers needed to share

access to results and information, the data was often faxed to the other office. In many instances, there is no assurance that the fax will not be seen by an unauthorized individual. In contrast, RHIO is able to track who views, reviews and files the medical information.

Can an audit be requested?

Yes. Patients can request an audit of which providers have viewed their information once a year for free. More than one audit per year will cost the patient a nominal fee. The audit report will include a list of the health care providers who have accessed the information, which information was viewed and the dates of access.

What is the consent process for a minor?

Minors who seek special services such as substance abuse counseling or mental health issues will be required to sign a separate RHIO consent form for those services.

Where can I find more information?

Go to grrhio.org for more in-depth information. And, while you are at it, consider signing up.

This article was written by David C. Pettig, with significant assistance from Amy Boyd, University at Buffalo Law School class of 2012. Pettig, principal with Pettig Torres PC, has been practicing trust and estate law for more than 30 years. He can be contacted at dcpettig@pettig.com or (585) 586-1430.