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## UC Davis Institute for Population Health Improvement provides free Direct accounts for rural California providers

### Initiative offers a first step into health information exchange



As part of its goal of accelerating the adoption of health information exchange (HIE) technology, the UC Davis Institute for Population Health Improvement's California Health eQuality (CHeQ) Program is offering free Direct accounts through its Rural HIE Incentive Program launched earlier this year.

Direct secure messaging allows providers to send patient information to and receive information from other trusted providers, such as specialists, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and laboratories. As a simple form of HIE, Direct enables more accurate, helpful and cost-effective quality of care the first time a clinician sees a patient or during an ongoing relationship.

Direct technology is an inexpensive, easy-to-use, quick-to-implement method to securely exchange health information in a manner similar to email. Direct improves care coordination by enabling providers, with or without an electronic health record, to securely share protected health information with care-team members across organizational boundaries to:

- transmit referrals and care summaries securely, consistently and electronically;
- send alerts to all providers caring for a patient upon hospital admission, discharge or transfer;
- connect to trusted health information exchanges.

CHeQ funds will provide free Direct accounts during 2014 for the first 1,000 rural providers in areas of California without existing Direct capacity through a community health information organization (HIO), with particular attention to reaching rural providers in areas of the state that currently lack options for HIE.

"Rural providers experience greater challenges in sharing patients' complete medical information, as distances between clinics are great, and fewer specialists practice within these areas," said Kenneth W. Kizer, distinguished professor at UC Davis and Director of the Institute for Population Health Improvement.

"These things make HIE adoption especially important in rural areas," he said. "Through these Direct accounts, we can offer rural providers the ability to exchange patient data securely using this basic and less resource-intensive form of HIE to springboard their improvements in coordinating care."

CHeQ chose Axesson to provide the free accounts to rural providers via California Direct, a commercial offering that is open to any

health-care stakeholder in California.

“We're enthusiastic about offering Direct to providers in California,” said Bill Beighe, general manager of Axesson. "This funding from CHeQ for free accounts for qualifying rural providers is an important investment given the need for a simple data exchange option in rural areas of California.”

California Direct also enables providers to send health information to patient-owned personal health records securely and efficiently, offering a cost-effective way to meet new requirements for patient access to information for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 Meaningful Use in 2014 and for patients to become more involved in their own health care.

For more information about Axesson, including how to obtain a free account in California Direct as a rural provider, please visit <http://californiadirect.org/>.

## **About CHeQ**

California Health eQuality (CHeQ), a program of the UC Davis Institute for Population Health Improvement, is a catalyst for health information exchange (HIE) for California. Funded by the California Health and Human Services Agency, and under the auspices of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) State HIE Cooperative Agreement, CHeQ is promoting coordinated care through health information exchange. Programs including a trusted exchange environment, improved public health capacity for electronic reporting, HIE acceleration funding opportunities, and the monitoring of HIE adoption lay a foundation for improved quality of care for all Californians. More information is available at <http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/iphi/Programs/cheq/>

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