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**New Funding for Technology to Help Doctors and Hospitals Deliver Better Care
Washington Health Information Collaborative Announces Applications for 2008 Grants**

Seattle, WA -- Grants of up to \$20,000 each will be awarded to physician clinics and hospitals in Washington state to support greater use of electronic medical record systems. Generally, grants will be awarded to smaller physician practices and hospitals throughout the state and other parts of the Pacific Northwest. This is the third consecutive year that funds will be awarded by the Washington Health Information Collaborative, a public-private partnership based in Seattle.

The program is sponsored by First Choice Health and the Washington State Health Care Authority, each of which provides \$500,000 to the awards program, with consultative and administrative support by Qualis Health and the Puget Sound Health Alliance. This year, up to \$200,000 of the Health Care Authority's funding is being reserved for larger grants of up to \$50,000 to address community-wide provider engagement and connectivity efforts.

Applications for the awards will be accepted from health care providers throughout Washington state, as well as those in Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. The award recipients will be announced this fall. Inquiries and applications for funding are being accepted now. Application information is available at www.WaHealthInfoCollaborative.org.

The grants are intended to promote enhanced patient safety and quality of care by helping doctors, other health practitioners and critical access hospitals transition away from old-fashioned, inefficient paper recordkeeping. Using electronic medical records and patient registry software within clinics and hospitals benefits patients and providers. Examples include enabling doctors to instantly and securely access needed information in a patient's medical history. Such technology can also automatically send reminders and alerts to doctors and patients about preventive tests and services or other care important for effective management of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Clinics and hospitals also use such technology to look at aggregated data across all patients to improve overall quality and answer questions such as: "How consistently did we provide annual foot exams to our patients with diabetes?" "What percentage of our female patients over 40 still need to get their annual mammogram?"

Expanding the use of health information technology will reduce administrative duplication, while improving the patient experience. "Inefficient paper recordkeeping in health care is wasteful and expensive, and adds to the cost of health care and to patient frustration," said Steve Hill, administrator of the Washington State Health Care Authority.

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"The use of electronic medical record systems and other information technology has great potential for improving patient safety and the quality of care," First Choice Health Chief Medical Officer Ze'ev Young said in announcing the third annual awards program. "But the cost of these systems is too high for some health care providers, especially in smaller practices and in rural areas."

The Collaborative's mission is to improve the quality of patient care through the use of health information technology. In addition to the 2008 funding provided by First Choice Health and the Washington State Health Care Authority, Qualis Health provides technical guidance to eligible award recipients. The Puget Sound Health Alliance provides key administrative support for the program. "We expect this program to grow, with additional employers and other purchasers, government agencies and others contributing to the improvement of our region's health technology infrastructure," added Dr. Young of First Choice Health. The deadline for completed applications is July 31, 2008. Final awards will be announced in October 2008.

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First Choice Health (www.fchn.com) is a regionally-based hospital and physician owned company that provides health care services to nearly one million members in Washington State and other parts of the Pacific Northwest. The company emphasizes quality health care, public service, and bringing technology to benefit health care practitioners and patients.

The **Washington State Health Care Authority** (www.hca.wa.gov) is an independent cabinet level agency. It administers health programs that provide access to high-quality health care for more than 500,000 Washington residents, including 316,000 state and local government employees and 128,000 enrollees in Basic Health, a state-subsidized program for low-income families.

The **Puget Sound Health Alliance** (www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org) is a private, non-profit organization serving five counties in the central Puget Sound region: King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston. The Alliance is a collaborative effort of those who provide, pay for, and use health care services, all working together to improve the quality of patient care for a healthier community, at a price more people can afford.

Qualis Health (www.qualishealth.org) is dedicated to improving the quality of healthcare delivery and health outcomes for individuals and populations across the nation. In operation since 1974, the non-profit, healthcare quality improvement organization (QIO) is headquartered in Seattle, Washington and has offices in Idaho, Nebraska, California, South Carolina and Alaska.

Health Information Technology ("Health IT"): *electronic health information management technology including Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), Personal Health Records (PHRs) and electronic information management systems that include functions such as chronic disease registries, decision support tools, electronic data reporting, computerized physician order entry, clinician feedback mechanisms and electronic prescribing.*