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## **Funding for Technology Adoption Available to Help Doctors Deliver Better Care**

(July 2, 2007) Seattle, WA. – Grants of up to \$20,000 each will be awarded to physician clinics and hospitals throughout the Pacific Northwest to support greater use of electronic medical record systems. Generally, grants and support services will be awarded to smaller physician practices and hospitals in rural areas. This is the third year that funds will be awarded by the Washington Health Information Collaborative, a public-private partnership.

Applications for the awards are being accepted from health care providers throughout Washington, Alaska, Oregon and Idaho. The awards will be presented this Fall to qualifying applicants. Inquiries and applications for funding are being accepted starting this week. The program is sponsored by First Choice Health Network, which is providing the initial \$500,000, and by the Puget Sound Health Alliance, Qualis Health and the Washington State Health Care Authority.

The grants are intended to promote great patient safety and quality of care, by helping doctors and other health practitioners transition away from old-fashioned, inefficient paper recordkeeping. Using electronic medical records or patient registry software within clinics and hospitals benefits patients and providers. Examples include enabling doctors to instantly and securely access all 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 of their patients to improve overall quality, and to answer questions such as "What percentage of my patients with diabetes did I give a foot exam to within the past year?"

"The use of electronic medical record systems and other information technology has great potential for improving patient safety and the quality of care for patients," 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 the smaller and rural ones."

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Expanding the use of health information technology in clinics and hospitals 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. “We’ve seen that clinics and hospitals that use electronic medical records are able to use fewer administrative office staff to find information much faster for patients, hospitals, insurers and labs.”

The Collaborative’s mission is to improve the quality of patient care through the use of information technology. In addition to the 2007 funding provided by First Choice Health, Qualis Health provides information technology consulting, quality improvement and other technical support to eligible award recipients. The Puget Sound Health Alliance and the Health Care Authority provide award administration services for the program. “We all expect this program to grow, with additional employers and other purchasers, government agencies and others contributing to the improvement of our state’s health technology infrastructure,” added Dr. Young.

Applications will be accepted until August 15, 2007. The final awards are expected to be announced in October. More information is available at [www.WAHealthInfoCollaborative.org](http://www.WAHealthInfoCollaborative.org).

**First Choice Health** ([www.fchn.com](http://www.fchn.com)) is a regionally-based hospital and physician owned company that provides health care services to nearly one million members in Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Idaho. 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](http://www.hca.wa.gov)) is a cabinet level agency that administers health programs and provides 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. HCA’s mission is to make affordable health care accessible by delivering the best value in health care to all enrollees through efficient procurement strategies and cost-effective health-care delivery systems.

The **Puget Sound Health Alliance** ([www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org)) is a private, non-profit organization comprised of more than 150 member organizations plus individual consumers—a team effort of those who provide, pay for and use health care services. The Alliance participants work together to improve the quality of patient care for a healthier community, at a price more people can afford. This year, the Alliance will begin publishing the region’s first public report comparing the performance of local clinics and hospitals, with particular focus on care for people with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, back pain, and depression.

**Qualis Health** ([www.qualishealth.org](http://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, health care quality improvement organization or “QIO” is based in Seattle, Washington and has offices in Alaska, Idaho, South Carolina and California.