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**Local Doctors Recognized as Leaders in Transition to Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and are Among First in Nebraska to Receive the Medicare Meaningful Use Incentive**

Omaha, Neb. - Local health care providers, Dr. Mark Woodruff and Dr. William Weeks, were recognized today by Nebraska's Lt. Governor, Rick Sheehy and Wide River Technology Extension Center (TEC), for their leadership in the transition to Electronic Health Records (EHRs). Drs. Woodruff and Weeks, of Southwest Family Physicians, are among the first physicians in the state to successfully attest and certify Meaningful Use of their EHR system as part of the Medicare EHR Incentive Program.



Dr. Mark Woodruff, Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy and Dr. William Weeks at the event.

Drs. Woodruff and Weeks have been providing medical care to families in the Omaha area since 1984.

"Patient care has improved dramatically. We have seen greater efficiencies in accessing records both in and outside of our office," said Dr. William Weeks. "Our staff and providers were unified in making this a success. It's really a great example of how common vision, goals and teamwork can achieve this huge accomplishment in our small medical practice."

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) awards providers an incentive payment as part of the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs. Drs. Woodruff and Weeks are among the first physicians in the country to each receive an initial \$18,000 Medicare EHR incentive payment from CMS. Eligible professionals and hospitals receive financial incentives when they demonstrate meaningful use of a certified EHR. Provider payments can amount to \$44,000 through Medicare or \$63,750 through Medicaid over the life of the initiative.

To assist Southwest Family Physicians in meeting this tremendous achievement, Wide River TEC supported the clinic's efforts to become meaningful users of EHRs. Designated by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), Wide River TEC is currently supporting over 700 providers in Nebraska to help ease this transition. Through an advisory role, Wide River TEC brings local expertise and support to primary care physicians and other healthcare for successful EHR adoption.

“On behalf of Wide River TEC, I congratulate Dr. Weeks and Dr. Woodruff on this important distinction. Their experience is invaluable in helping clinicians take the necessary steps to transform from paper-based practices to electronically-enabled systems,” commented Todd Searls, Director of Wide River TEC. “We commend them for being at the forefront of EHR implementation and hope their experience will encourage other clinicians to follow in their footsteps.”

“It may seem like a small thing, but never losing a chart, never looking for a chart, never having to wait for a chart, never fighting over a chart and therefore always having immediate access to any and all patient information is a tremendous time saver and stress reliever,” noted Dr. Mark Woodruff. “EHRs make me more confident that important information about the patient is not slipping through the cracks.”

As a result of their efforts, Dr. Weeks and Dr. Woodruff have joined an exclusive group of national healthcare leaders as members of the Meaningful Use Vanguard (MUV). MUV is an initiative of ONC and is designed to honor, thank and bring together clinicians who have successfully made the transition to EHRs. They will serve as local leaders and advisors in the nation’s transition toward an electronically-enabled health care system.

This is the first year doctors are eligible for incentives. The incentive dollars were authorized as part of the 2009 economic stimulus also known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The stimulus bill included nearly \$20 billion for health information technology initiatives, including the incentive payments to doctors and other providers. The federal government's goal is for every American to have an electronic health record by 2014.

### **About Wide River Technology Extension Center**

Wide River TEC is Nebraska’s Regional Extension Centers (REC) designated as having the experience and capacity necessary to assist healthcare providers with the task of modernizing their practices with certified EHRs. By utilizing EHRs, providers can offer higher quality, safer care and create tangible improvements to their practices, allowing them to make better clinical decisions, provide more coordinated care and increase efficiency in their offices. RECs were created under the Health Information Technology Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. HITECH provided approximately \$2 billion nationally in new programs to provide training and technical assistance and to demonstrate the effectiveness of health information technology in supporting improvement in care. Over 70,000 primary care providers nationwide have signed on to work with 62 RECs to implement EHRs, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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