

Advancing Healthcare through Health Information Exchange

The Gulf Coast Health Information Exchange (HIE) had its official launch on Thursday, February 11th during the Manatee County Medical Society's monthly meeting for practice administrators. The Gulf Coast HIE is a not-for-profit corporation that is rooted in Manatee County and is chartered to keep health information exchange a community based endeavor. The chairman of the board is Dr. Philip Tally of Neuro Spinal Associates.

The goal of the Gulf Coast HIE is to facilitate a trusted framework for independent healthcare providers to communicate with each other via electronic means. This inherently streamlines workflow, while eliminating much of the need for fax, phone, and mail. The HIE acts as a secure, HIPPA compliant, web-based portal for credentialed healthcare providers to share patient records.

While there is a major initiative in motion to implement an EMR, many practices are limited to the information that they receive from the 200+ EMR software vendors that solicit them. The purpose of an EMR is to facilitate electronic patient records within the walls of your office. The purpose of HIE is to facilitate electronic patient records within a healthcare community. The Gulf Coast HIE is the entity that will interface with your EMR, Practice Management Software, RIS, and LIS to enable your practice to communicate with the rest of the healthcare community.

Some important considerations are:

1. You DO NOT need an EMR to connect your practice to the HIE.
2. You will NOT achieve meaningful use with only having an EMR. Your EMR must have the ability to communicate with other EMR's in the healthcare community (this is done by connecting to the HIE).
3. The HIE will interface with all EMR's software vendors that are capable of exchanging data through national standards.
4. Your EMR will charge an interface fee to connect to the HIE. These fees can vary substantially and it is ALWAYS wise to discuss this with your sales rep before signing a contract. And get it in writing!
5. The HIE WILL SAVE YOU MONEY and streamline your practice.

Since the launch on February 11th, the following practices have joined the Gulf Coast HIE and are anticipated to be live and sharing information in March!

1. Neuro Spinal Associates
2. Urology Partners
3. Women's Oncology Center
4. Premiere OB/GYN Associates

Several others are currently engaged in discussions with the Gulf Coast HIE including primary care practices, specialty care practices, diagnostic centers and hospitals.

You can contact Sara Gaines, Director, Gulf Coast HIE, sara.gaines@manateemed.org (with the MCMS) or Marc Myers @ Avocare (the HIE service provider) to learn more about joining or to ask questions about EMR's (phone: 813-394-5485; email: Marc.Myers@AvocareHealth.com).