



For Immediate Release
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Blue Ridge Regional Hospital Connected to Other Hospitals Regionally

For several years, the 16 hospitals serving western North Carolina, including Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, have explored options to securely and efficiently exchange electronic patient information among the region's health care providers. The hospitals obtained \$2.5 million in federal HRSA funds and \$1 million from The Duke Endowment to develop the foundation for the exchange. The WNC hospitals developed the following project goals:

- Long-Term Goal: Allow every WNC resident to have a longitudinal electronic medical record that can be accessed and updated in real time by any authorized provider.
- Short-Term Goal: Allow the secure exchange of electronic patient information between WNC hospitals.

WNC Data Link allows authorized physicians and clinicians to view a patient's electronic records across all WNC hospital systems. Upon request, WNC Data Link searches all of the WNC hospitals' information systems for a patient's records and collates them in a standardized format in real time. Clinicians can access the records through any internet connected device. In the future, authorized users will be able to access electronic records from physician offices, health departments, clinics and other health care providers to create a longitudinal view of the patient's medical history.

How is this enhancing patient safety and quality of care? An example would be a patient arriving at the hospital and is unable to communicate. The ER physician would be able to access WNC Data Link to see if the patient had been to another hospital, thus being able to pull patient records – current medications, lab reports, next of kin and other data that can be used for immediate care and treatment.

“We are most interested in optimizing care,” said Jerry Cade, emergency room physician at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital. “But it will also reduce costs to the patient because duplicate tests won't be ordered.”

Cade said having access to vital patient history, like whether they are on blood thinner or have an allergy to X-ray dye, will be invaluable. “Believe it or not, people forget these things quite a bit,” he said.

Also, if a patient needs to be transported, the medical team on the receiving end has a jump start on care, being able to access the patient files through Data Link.

Data Link has selected patient information from the WNC hospitals. This includes patient admission/discharge information, lab results/lab trending reports, microbiology reports, radiology reports, medications, allergies and transcribed reports. All 16 hospitals in the region are linked up to this system, devoted to providing high quality care and patient safety. For more information about the Data Link project or about services offered at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, log onto www.brrhospital.org.

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