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HEALTHCARE REFORM SHOULD INCLUDE CONNECTED HEALTH AND PARTICIPATORY MEDICINE, SAYS REPORT SUBMITTED TO PRESIDENT OBAMA BY CENTER FOR CONNECTED HEALTH

Online discussion included feedback from academic and business leaders, technologists, physicians, health insurers, patients and payers.

BOSTON, MA, JANUARY 22, 2009 – In response to President Obama’s call for recommendations on healthcare reform, the Center for Connected Health, a division of Partners HealthCare, convened an online Community Health Discussion in December, to explore the opportunities and advantages connected health, population management and participatory medicine can offer to healthcare reform. A report of the discussion findings were submitted to President Obama’s Presidential Transition Health Policy Team, led by Secretary of Health and Human Services Nominee Tom Daschle.

Over 30 participants, including academic and business leaders, technologists, physicians, health insurers, patients and payers, took part in the discussion. The Center’s final report submitted to the Obama team addressed how connected health and its core tools – physiologic monitoring presented to the patient in a meaningful way, and data-driven coaching to help individuals make positive lifestyle and health behavior changes – could play a critical role in transforming healthcare delivery, improving quality and expanding access to care throughout the U.S.

“Among connected health advocates, there is a concern that disproportionate emphasis will be placed on increasing access to care through universal coverage and on traditional health information technology, or electronic medical records (EMRs),” said Joseph C. Kvedar, MD, Director, Center for Connected Health. “While EMRs are a critically important technology to improve quality, they support current workflow and reimbursement models which are tragically flawed and provide no incentive to rein in costs.

“True healthcare reform will require a more patient-centered approach, and a broader policy palette, including incentives for providers to adopt more population health management tools and for patients and consumers to take more ownership of their health,” Kvedar added.

Recommendations submitted to President Obama’s Health Policy Team outlined opportunities to create a patient-centered care delivery system, true payment reform that features payment for quality and not units of service, and incentives

for widespread adoption of population health management tools and strategies, including connected health technologies.

The Center for Connected Health is already applying some of these principles in providing care to chronic disease patients. For example, one of the Center's initiatives is the Connected Cardiac Care program, offered to heart failure patients at risk for frequent hospitalizations. Data from a pilot study showed that Connected Cardiac Care can reduce re-hospitalizations by improving patients' understanding of their condition, and providing on-going nursing support and review of vital signs, such as heart rate and blood pressure, while the patient is at home.

"The combination of payment reform emphasizing quality and population health management strategies including connected health would be powerful additions to the health care reform initiatives already being planned by the talented team President Obama has assembled," noted Kvedar.

About the Center for Connected Health

The Center for Connected Health, a division of Partners HealthCare, is creating effective, new solutions and innovative interventions to deliver quality patient care outside of the traditional medical setting. Our programs use a combination of remote-monitoring technology, sensors, and online communications and intelligence to improve patient adherence, engagement and clinical outcomes. The Center also offers expert online second opinions, enhanced medical education and training, and engages in innovative research to discover new pathways to better care, including the use of virtual worlds and online coaching. Visit www.connected-health.org.

Boston-based Partners HealthCare is an integrated health system founded in 1994 by Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital. In addition to its two academic medical centers, the Partners system also includes community and specialty hospitals, community health centers, a physician network, home health and long-term care services, and other health-related entities. Partners is one of the nation's leading biomedical research organizations and a principal teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. Partners is a non-profit organization. Visit www.partners.org.

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Editor's Note: For the complete report submitted to President Obama's Transition Health Policy Team, please visit www.connected-health.org, or contact Gina Cella (781-334-4692 or ginacella@comcast.net).