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**Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina:
Rural Mississippi medical practice is first to benefit from
Katrina Phoenix Project to rebuild patient medical records**

WAVELAND, Miss., (July 25,2006) – Since Hurricane Katrina nearly wiped out the town of Waveland, Miss., two staff members and one physician at Waveland Medical Center (WMC) have learned a lot about post-disaster patient care. One unanticipated lesson came from the loss of all patient medical records at the practice, more than 10,000 in total, due to nine feet of hurricane floodwaters. Most of the patients now visiting WMC for the first time have no medical records and don't remember their medical histories, making it difficult for WMC to treat and care for them.

“For the past year, we have had to rely on our memories and notecards to keep track of patient care while treating patients outside or in a tent, battling against power outages, and working without heat in the cold and without air conditioning in the summer,” said Roberta Chilimiagras, M.D., WMC's owner.

WMC is the first medical practice to rebuild its medical records with the help of electronic healthcare records (EHR) software, SOAPWare, donated to the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Foundation's (HIMSS) Katrina Phoenix Project. HIMSS, a national leadership organization in healthcare information technology, established the Katrina Phoenix Project in September 2005, to coordinate EHR donations of software and services from vendors to medical practices. It is led by Pat Wise, vice president, Healthcare Information Systems.

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HIMSS provided a grant to WMC through the HIMSS Foundation and implemented it through volunteers with the Katrina Phoenix project. The HIMSS Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Society and is dedicated to furthering healthcare IT professions. Since the early 1990s, the foundation has awarded more than \$150,000 in [scholarships](#) to more than 45 exceptional students. In addition, the foundation also administers the funding to rebuild medical practices devastated by the hurricanes in the gulf area in 2005.

To ensure the success of the EHR implementation, physician mentors, recognized for their proven success of EHR implementation, and recipients of the HIMSS Nicholas E. Davies Award of Excellence, are assisting their peers in understanding how to use the new technology in the practice of medicine.

Northstar, a service network, will deliver the data and software applications for the practice from True North Technology. True North is providing Total Office, a proprietary, on-demand, total-managed IT service which will include the new MacBook computer from Apple.

David Collins, manager of HIMSS' Davies Awards program, said that WMC is the first to receive assistance from the Katrina Phoenix Project in recognition of their desire to improve access to patient information and to be prepared in the event of another disaster.

For one WMC patient, the loss of medical records due to Hurricane Katrina was particularly devastating. Evelyn Bodine, a Waveland resident living with diabetes, needs regular testing, treatment and doses of medication. Without access to her medical records, WMC employees relied on their memories to continue Bodine's treatment.

Alice Loveys, M.D., a pediatrician from Pittsford, N.Y., will visit WMC today and help map out workflow processes and customize the EHR with Dr. Chilimiagras. Dr. Loveys' practice was recognized with a HIMSS Davies Award in 2004 for her success with the SOAPWare EHR.

“Our top priority has always been caring for our patients,” said Lynn Murray, practice manager at WMC. “EHRs will better equip us to seamlessly care for our patients in the event of another catastrophe.”

An estimated 15 medical centers in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama are expected to receive EHR donations from the vendors participating by providing donations to the Katrina Phoenix Project.

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About the Katrina Phoenix Project

The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Foundation's (HIMSS) Katrina Phoenix Project is focused on aiding paper-based medical practices—decimated by Hurricane Katrina—by rebuilding with electronic health records (EHR). A 27-member, multi-disciplinary advisory committee volunteers of HIMSS leaders, physicians and healthcare administrators, HIMSS Electronic Health Record Vendors Association (EHRVA), and Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama Quality Improvement Organization representatives help to coordinate EHR gifts, practice selection and implementation, services and mentoring to transition recipients to EHR-based care. Currently, five practices are in the reconstitution process: two in Louisiana; two in Mississippi; and one in Alabama.

For more information, visit <http://www.himss.org>.

Contributing EHR Vendors

A4 Health Systems

Casenotes

Companion Technologies

Greenway Medical Technologies

HealthLanguage

InteGreat

JMJ Technologies

Lakes Health Systems

MD Synergy

MedcomSoft

MedicAlert Foundation

MediNotes Corporation

Medpracticeflow

MedQuist

Misys Healthcare

Optimal Practice Solutions

OptimizeIT

Practice Partner

RedMedic

SoapWare

SRIT

TeleVital

Truenorth