WYHIO
WYOMING HEALTH INFORMATION ORGANIZATION

Geoffrey Smith, M.D. - Chairman

BOARD MEMBERS
Dana Barnett – Wyoming Hospital Association
Steven Chasson – Wyoming Primary Care Association
Leland Clabots – Wyoming Department of Health
Robert Fagnant, M.D. – Wyoming Medical Society
Andrew Fisher – Great-West Healthcare
Larry Madsen – Black Hills Bentonite

EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS
Carol Jenkins – Wyoming Healthcare Commission

Press release
Aug. 23, 2005
Contact: Anne Ladd, (307) 473-3839

Wyoming Health Information Organization formed to launch electronic health records implementation

Stakeholders in the exchange of health data to reduce cost, increase access and improve the quality of healthcare services in Wyoming are uniting to develop an electronic health records network. A nonprofit public-private partnership called "WYHIO" will oversee planning, development and support of health information technology initiatives throughout the state, and will connect Wyoming with similar efforts across the country.

Fifty representatives of medical care payers, purchasers and consumers, providers, and local, state and federal government gathered in Casper this month to formalize the structure of the "Wyoming Health Information Organization" (WYHIO). An Interim Board of Directors was named, to be chaired by Geoffrey Smith, M.D., a Casper radiologist who led a study mandated by the 2004 Wyoming Legislature on creation of a uniform statewide health care information and communications technology system. Other interim WYHIO Board members are:

- Dana Barnett, United Medical Center Outreach Director in Cheyenne, representing the Wyoming Hospital Association (provider representative);
- Steve Chasson, Executive Director, Wyoming Primary Care Association, Cheyenne (provider representative);
- Lee Clabots, Deputy Director of Administration, Wyoming Department of Health, Cheyenne (state government representative);
- Robert Fagnant, M.D., a Rock Springs gynecologist and obstetrician, representing the Wyoming Medical Society, (provider representative);
- Andrew Fisher, Assistant Vice President, Great-West Healthcare, in Denver (payer representative);
- Larry Madsen, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Black Hills Bentonite, Casper (healthcare purchaser representative);
- Carol Jenkins, a healthcare industry consultant based in Buffalo and a Wyoming Healthcare Commission member (ex-officio).

The Interim WYHIO Board will continue the work of the Information Technology and Technical Management Subcommittee chaired by Dr. Smith that will sunset in September 2005 following the release

of its report to the Commission and recommendations to the Legislature. The report and recommendations are the result of a study conducted in Wyoming over the last year by John Snow, Inc. (JSI), a public health consulting firm. JSI evaluated the current state of health information technology initiatives in Wyoming. Simultaneously, the federal government's Office of Health Information Technology began advancing its vision and JSI worked to connect Wyoming to the larger national movement. Recommendations will be made to the Wyoming Healthcare Commission and the state Legislature this fall for enabling, sharing, promoting and managing the collection and exchange of health information electronically between physicians, hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories, and public health agencies.

One of the first acts of the WYHIO is to immediately pursue health information technology grants, Dr. Smith said. He said that JSI, Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi's office, and the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have given Wyoming substantial assistance with the WYHIO and identification of potential funding for electronic health records implementation. "I can't say how much we appreciate the help and interest," he said.

"I am watching all sorts of fellow citizens pitching in for our collective good and am proud to watch the process in action. Back in 1990, after I took a job in Wyoming but before I moved here, someone in another state came up to me and asked: 'WHY-OMING?' I understood then that 'community' is Wyoming as I have always experienced it. This is another affirmation of 'why.'"

For more information, email WHCC@state.wy.us, the official address of the Wyoming Healthcare Commission, which will be acting as the WYHIO's temporary home, or call Commission Director Anne Ladd, (307) 473-3839.