

# CareAdvisors Introduces Equity Information Exchange as a Solution to Health Disparities in Minority Communities

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, January 25, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Over the last decade, healthcare providers have adopted interoperable electronic health record technology to allow access to patient health information and to improve the quality, safety, and cost of care. However, safety net providers, such as community hospitals and health centers that serve low-income and vulnerable populations with complex health needs, were often unable to benefit from this digital transformation.

[CareAdvisors](#), a Chicago-based healthcare technology firm, took action when it was clear that an already-significant data gap in health information access was widening

during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company introduced an equity information exchange (EIX) that combines all the information that allows healthcare providers to securely share a patient's medical information through a health information exchange and combines that with the human services data available in a community information exchange (ie., services, such as food, housing, and transportation).

"With an EIX, patients and providers benefit by allowing for cross-sector network partners, including community-based organizations and physical and behavioral health providers, to access and securely share information about a patient's medical history and social needs," CareAdvisors Chief Executive Officer Chris Gay explained.

Chicago's West Side and South Side neighborhoods are among the early adopters of this technology that will improve the health status of low-income individuals, ethnic minorities facing



health disparities, patients with multiple chronic conditions and individuals experiencing homelessness. Several members of the [Chicago Homelessness & Health Response Group for Equity](#) (CHHRGE) coalition have begun to take advantage of this new platform. Member organizations are exploring pilot opportunities supporting individuals facing homelessness.

“There’s a vital need to improve data sharing and enhance care coordination to at-risk populations,” said Stephen Brown, MSW, LCSW, director of preventative emergency medicine, UI Hospital and Health Sciences System and a member of the CHHRGE collective working to address COVID-19’s impact on people experiencing homelessness in Chicago. “The patients we serve have received fragmented, uncoordinated care. This is about reducing misery and allowing people to thrive.”

There are many applications for this type of operability that supports cross sector data sharing. The following agencies are currently looking to invest in solutions that include data sharing with clinical and human services information: the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services’ (HHS) Office of Minority Health; the HHS Administration for Children and Families; and the National Institutes of Health. CareAdvisors is also exploring options with maternal health home visiting programs and homelessness programs across the country with the Health Resources & Services Administration.

“It’s all about care coordination,” explained Robyn Golden, LCSW, associate vice president of social work and community health, at Rush University Medical Center, and a CHHRGE coalition leader. “This is the way for us to demonstrate our commitment to the community and offer continuity of care. All of Chicago needs to be connected.”

Ease of use and broad access to resources were key drivers for CareAdvisors when developing the EIX. Focused on its health equity mission, the company has taken an open source approach to its EIX, which is hosted by the non-profit CareAdvisors Software Foundation. The EIX offers data across platforms, regardless of a healthcare organization’s social service e-referral system or electronic health record vendor.

CareAdvisors’ EIX provides access to more than 150 million patient records across the country. To provide the data, CareAdvisors tapped into CommonWell Health Alliance.

“Blocking data is not good for any healthcare provider,” stated Paul L. Wilder, executive director of the network provider CommonWell Health Alliance. “Those who have been reluctant to adopt this technology are now seeing the gains from a coordinated ecosystem. Connecting to a nationwide network helps to transform our healthcare delivery system and data access. It allows safety-net providers to act big, while running small. Instead of owning the data, you have access to it, making it possible to know if your patient is taking blood thinners and allowing you to improve health outcomes.”

CommonWell Health Alliance is not alone in its focus on interoperability. Carequality began

building a bridge between health networks in 2015. David Cassel, who served as the executive director of the Carequality interoperability initiative from its early stages through widespread adoption across the United States, led the effort that established trust between networks in order to enable the electronic exchange of health information.

“Carequality wants technology vendors to bring smaller providers like safety net community hospitals, health centers and federally qualified health centers to the exchange,” said Cassel, who now serves as president of SAFE Health Systems. “So often, these providers don’t have an EHR platform that can connect to an exchange, or may not have the technology capabilities to connect on their own to the exchange.”

“It’s a ‘win-win’ for the community and the care providers serving those neighborhoods,” said Gay. “This innovative program is part of CareAdvisors’ Healthy Together network, supporting value-based social care.”

#### About CareAdvisors

CareAdvisors, is a Chicago-based healthcare technology firm that provides value-based social care solutions to some of the largest U.S. health systems and health plans. The company recently built one of the largest navigation programs in the nation, helping millions enroll in social services and access vital resources.

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