

PDH Launches Obstetric Electronic Medical Records Program

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In March 2009, Plumas District Hospital launched an obstetric electronic medical records (EMR) program. The EMR system is web-based and provides a complete clinical record of care for the mother and newborn beginning with the first clinic visit through labor, delivery and the postpartum clinic visit. The patient's information is accessed wherever it is needed - from the clinic, hospital, physician's home or office. Access to the patient's complete record throughout the pregnancy reduces potential for medication and transcription errors. The obstetric team at Plumas District Hospital is working with Perinatal Associates of Northern Nevada to eventually offer expectant mothers access, through a web-based telemedicine system, to direct advice from perinatal specialists without having to leave Quincy.

The EMR system, manufactured by Philips Medical Systems, utilizes four new start-of-the-art fetal monitors. The monitors provide integrated monitoring of maternal pulse rate and blood pressure, as well as monitoring of fetal heart rate, uterine activity, and fetal movement. The built-in monitoring features are consistent with American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) standards. In addition, the monitors are cordless, allowing freedom of movement for the mother during labor.

Funding for the program was provided through a \$326,357 grant, awarded to Plumas District Hospital by PacifiCare/UnitedHealthcare to replace an existing obstetric telemedicine system with a new information technology infrastructure to help the hospital continue to provide adequate perinatal services to the rural communities in Plumas County.

Plumas District Hospital presently has five family practitioners providing obstetric care, and is the only hospital in Plumas county providing obstetric services. Expectant mothers can access obstetric services 24 hours per day and benefit from a one-on-one nurse-to-patient ratio.

Plumas District Hospital has partnered with the UC Davis Medical Center obstetric telemedicine program since 2001, providing patients and their physicians with access to specialized medical care and education through the use of telecommunications technology. At present, there are only four other rural hospitals in California which have obstetric telemedicine programs in operation. Currently Plumas District Hospital is also the only rural hospital to have a pediatric emergency telemedicine program established with UC Davis Medical Center. Enhancing and expanding telemedicine capabilities will continue to allow Plumas District Hospital to better serve the community, as well as, serve as a model for other rural and/or critical access hospitals.

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