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CONTACT HealthPartners: Patricia Lund 952-883-5487

patricia.a.lund@healthpartners.com

Essentia: Maureen Talarico 218-786-2315

Maureen.talarico@essentiahealth.org

HealthPartners, Essentia Health study to look at increasing preventive cancer care in rural areas

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — A HealthPartners Institute study will assess whether a clinical decision support tool in electronic medical records called the Cancer Prevention Wizard can increase preventive care in rural areas for cancer.

The Cancer Prevention Wizard (CP Wizard) helps primary care providers identify all eligible patients ages 11-80 who are not up-to-date on recommended cancer prevention services and it provides them with evidence-based recommendations for primary and secondary cancer prevention. Primary cancer prevention will include smoking cessation, body weight management, and human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination. Secondary cancer prevention will include screening tests for colorectal, breast, cervical and lung cancer according to US Preventive Services Task Force guidelines.

The 5-year study, *Implementing Cancer Prevention Using Patient-Provider Clinical Decision Support*, will involve more than 150,000 patients who receive care at 30 Essentia Health primary care clinics in northern Minnesota, northwestern Wisconsin and eastern North Dakota. Using a cluster-randomized trial design, the study will compare three groups of clinics: in one group, primary care providers will use the tool to identify and offer prevention services to their patients; in a second group, certified medical assistants will use the tool and discuss screening and prevention options with patients before they see their doctor. The third group includes clinics where patients will get usual care that has no cancer prevention activities promoted by the CP Wizard. In addition, the CP Wizard will personalize recommendations by determining each patient's unique characteristics and using special cancer risk assessment tools from the National Cancer Institute.

Researchers will assess whether use of the CP Wizard results in more patients getting recommended primary and secondary cancer preventive services and whether certified medical assistants have an effect on patient outcomes. The study will also evaluate if use of the Cancer



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Prevention Wizard results in higher short-term health care costs but lower long-term costs compared to clinics that do not use the tool.

[“Nearly one in four Americans](#) live in rural areas, and this study has the potential to improve their health and quality of life because research clearly shows that in general people in rural areas have higher rates of chronic illnesses than people who live in larger cities,” said Tom Elliott, MD, HealthPartners Institute senior research fellow and principal investigator.

“This tool will create a patient’s risk profile for cancer and display it in one place so that the clinician and the patient can engage in a shared decision making discussion to create a plan for primary prevention of cancer and cancer screening. The rapid collection of the data creates efficiency for a busy clinician and how it displays this data for the patient will lead to better patient engagement,” said Joe Bianco, MD, Essentia Health co-investigator on the study.

The CP Wizard project is funded by a \$3 million grant from the National Cancer Institute. It is the third partnership between HealthPartners and Essentia Health to use clinical decision support tools in electronic medical records to provide evidence-based guidelines in the exam room to improve care. Other decision support tools being studied include providing current recommendations to reduce cardiovascular risk in patients with serious mental illness and identifying patients that have pre-diabetes who are at risk of developing diabetes if left untreated. According to the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) rural residents have fewer visits to health care providers and are less likely to receive recommended preventive services including cancer prevention and management of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

About HealthPartners Institute

HealthPartners Institute is part of HealthPartners, the largest consumer-governed, non-profit health care organization in the nation with a mission to improve health and well-being in partnership with members, patients and the community. One of the largest medical research and education centers in the Midwest, the Institute has about 450 studies underway each year, trains more than 700 medical residents and 1,400 students and provides continuing medical education for 25,000 clinicians as well as patient education and clinical quality improvement. For more information, visit healthpartnersinstitute.org.

About Essentia Health

Essentia Health is an integrated health system serving patients in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Idaho. Headquartered in Duluth, Minn., Essentia Health combines the strengths and talents of 13,900 employees, including nearly 1,800 physicians and advanced practitioners, who serve our patients and communities through the mission of being called to make a healthy difference in people’s lives. Essentia Health, which includes many Catholic facilities, is guided by the values of quality, hospitality, respect, justice, stewardship and teamwork. The organization delivers on its promise to be “*Here With You*” in 15 hospitals, 68 clinics, seven long-term care facilities, two assisted living facilities, four independent living facilities, five ambulance services and one research institute. Essentia Health is accredited as an Accountable Care Organization by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

