

# Perspective: Greater Rochester RHIO health information exchange pilot begins

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The [Greater Rochester](#) Regional Health Information Organization is off and running.

The nine-county RHIO, comprising healthcare providers, payers, local business partners and the community, has begun its pilot this week that allows 20 physicians from four practices to access clinical results.

The [RHIO](#) was created in 2006, as a result of two years of community and business discussion surrounding health information exchange, according to Ted Kremer, executive director. “We’ve had a RHIO in a bottle for a while,” he said. After set-up and a lot of time spent testing, the pilot physicians are now able to query test results through Axolotl’s clinical messaging system and receive those results through the healthcare IT vendor’s Elysium EMR Lite technology and other physician electronic medical record systems, regardless of vendor.

The EMR Lite is a good entrée for smaller hospitals that are challenged to provide local physicians with connection to health information, said Kremer.

Especially for this region, the EMR Lite can provide a lot of value for rural hospitals, said John Reisenberger, vice president of RHIO development for Axolotl.

With the Federal Communications Commission awarding a [grant](#) to the Rochester area to build a broadband telehealth network, EMR development will likely be rapid for the rural healthcare providers.

The Greater Rochester RHIO will go live with its virtual health record within the first quarter of 2008, said Kremer. It is currently working to create new consent forms with the various counties of the New York Department of Public Health and other stakeholders, including the 1.2 million patients that would be impacted by the system.

The RHIO has taken on the task of educating patients of the new changes. “The communications piece is big,” said Kremer. “We did not want all the burden to fall on the physicians to communicate to their patients.”

That kind of thinking sums up the collaborative nature of this organization. Recognizing its value, health plan Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, the Eastman Kodak Company and the Rochester Health Commission tackled the possibility of health information exchange for the area back in 2004. The award of a HEAL grant – a health information technology grant – from the New York State Department of Health and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York was instrumental in establishing the RHIO. Payers Excellus and Preferred Care were at the table early on, delivering numerous financial and other support. “It takes a little collaboration of community work to make things better,” said Kremer.

Expect to hear a lot in 2008 about the Greater Rochester RHIO’s developments. For now, this week, said Kremer, “We’re ready to start providing value to doctors and provide quality care to the patients.”