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Occidental Area Health Center “Go Live” TODAY First Community Health Center Organization in Sonoma County to implement Electronic Health Records

**Wednesday, July 9th, 9am
Occidental Area Health Center
Occidental, CA**

West County Health Centers, Inc. goes live **TODAY** with Electronic Health Records (EHR) at the Occidental Area Health Center in Occidental.

West County Health Centers is the **FIRST** of ten health center organizations in the Redwood Community Health Coalition (RCHC) to implement a shared electronic health records system. Redwood Community Health Coalition will implement the *eClinicalWorks* system at 18 healthcare sites in Sonoma, Marin, Napa and Yolo counties over the next three years at a cost of 12 million dollars. West County Health Centers’ staff has planned intensively for over a year and trained employees for the last three months to prepare for this day. According to Occidental physician, Dr. Jason Cunningham, “Electronic Health Records represent a seismic change for health care in America. As a provider and a champion of community health centers it is very exciting to be involved in a project that further reduces the disparity in health care services between the rich and the poor. It is my passion to provide the same quality of health care to my patients regardless if they are a CEO or a homeless person and having access to an Electronic Health Record makes that possible.”

The advantages of Electronic Health Records for WCHC patients, providers, and the community are tremendous—from the power of harnessing the information to improve clinical care, to the efficiency of communicating electronically with doctors, to the space-saving impact of not having paper charts. The most important and valuable result of implementing an Electronic Health Records system is the shift in the focus of the health care delivery system from treatment to prevention, thus improving the quality of care and positively affecting community health outcomes. West County Health Centers is putting the old adage, “An ounce of prevention equals a pound of cure”, into action today with its Electronic Health Records.

The Occidental Area Health Center is the third site to “Go Live” under the West County Health Centers (WCHC) umbrella. The newest WCHC satellite site, Sebastopol Community Health Center opened in January 2008 as a paperless office and has also served as a model and training facility for the EHR implementation. The Russian River Health Center in Guerneville went live on June 18th and has so far been a model for successful implementation. According to Mary Szecsey, Executive Director, “This has been by far the most complicated and the most critical project that we have ever undertaken in my thirteen years with the health centers. I am so proud of how we have managed our way through this uncharted territory with such grace, humor, respect, intelligence and courage. We still have many months of hard work ahead of us, but I am confident that our implementation will be successful and that our patients and community will be well-served by your ongoing dedication.”

According to Dr. Steve Bromer, West County Health Centers Medical Director, “Medical care has changed dramatically in the years since our health centers first opened their doors. More and more people live with chronic conditions that require ever increasing complicated interventions to control. The sheer number of medications used in our practices has grown exponentially in the last two decades. We also have access to more and more interventions to prevent illness. Electronic Health Records are a tool that helps us continue to provide effective, safe and timely medical care in the ever-changing health care environment. We are very excited about this transition to EHR and believe it will support us in providing the state-of-the-art health care that our communities deserve.”

A primary reason that RCHC chose eClinicalWorks software was its population management functionality, including the ability to aggregate individual patient information and create reports about the specific health conditions affecting our population. In the future this information could be used by a variety of agencies such as Public Health to predict health epidemics and the need for medical interventions, which will significantly improve the health of our patients and the community.

The Electronic Health Records are encrypted and stored in an electronic data storing facility off-site with 24 hour high security and also in another similar professional storage facility as a back-up. None of the protected, secure and private data is stored on the computers in the offices nor can it be accessed without proper authorization. This new system employs role based access to information through passwords and AES 256 bit encryption which ensures the highest security, far better than a paper record could ever have.

Moving to a paperless system is a huge undertaking but WCHC believes that Electronic Health Records are the future, and the future is NOW!

West County Health Centers, Inc. (WCHC) provides comprehensive, quality and accessible health care services to the communities of West Sonoma County at three sites: Occidental Area Health Center, Russian River Health Center, and Sebastopol Community Health Center. We are a cohesive team of health care providers, support staff and volunteers dedicated to wellness, compassion, affordability and excellence of care. We

believe in non-judgmental and equal care for all members of our diverse community. For more information, see: www.wchealth.org. ###