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Coalition Led by Arizona Health-e Connection Awarded \$10.8 Million to Encourage Electronic Health Record Adoption and Use in Arizona *Funds to focus on assisting an estimated 95 percent of Arizona primary care providers*

Phoenix, Ariz. (April 27, 2010)—A coalition led by Arizona Health-e Connection (AzHeC), a statewide non-profit charged with leading Arizona’s health information technology coordination, has been awarded \$10,791,644 by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to develop an Arizona Regional Extension Center to assist state healthcare providers in adopting electronic health records and achieving “meaningful use” of them as defined by the federal government, which will enable receipt of Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Coalition partners include Arizona State University’s Department of Biomedical Informatics, Health Services Advisory Group and the Purchasing & Assistance Collaborative for Electronic Health Records. Additionally, the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association, Arizona Medical Association, Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association and University of Arizona will assist with education and outreach to the health care community.

Currently, within Arizona, more than 75 percent of allopathic and osteopathic physicians use paper-based medical records, according to a report by Arizona State University’s Center for Health Information and Research (CHiR). The Arizona Regional Extension Center will focus on practices with 10 or fewer providers, which it is believed represent 95 percent of Arizona’s estimated 6,700 primary care providers.

“The program will seek to understand and address the challenges Arizona providers face in transitioning to electronic records and make that process as easy as possible,” said Melissa Rutala, MPH, program director for the Arizona Regional Extension Center. “General and technical assistance services will be provided to enable providers to achieve ‘meaningful use’

of electronic health records and receive federal incentives as well as realize the benefits that electronic health records provide as a tool to facilitate higher quality of care and patient safety.”

While many providers in Arizona are currently not using electronic health records, some are and are doing so with great success. Dr. Tiffany Nelson, MD, of Desert Ridge Family Physicians has used an electronic health record system since she opened her five physician family practice in 2004, which serves 11,000 patients of all age groups. “Our system saves us valuable time each and every day. All authorized staff members have immediate access to a patient’s full medical chart at any time—no more searching for missing charts. We also have added email exchange with our patients, improving the quality of our communications and increasing the efficiency of our documentation,” said Nelson. “The highly structured and organized information allows our practice to do criteria-based searches for patients, which can be very valuable. For example, we were able to quickly identify and notify the first wave of high risk patients to receive our limited doses of H1N1 vaccine. This would have been prohibitively time-consuming if we had paper charts,” Nelson adds.

The Regional Extension Center program is part of an estimated \$40 billion effort by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to provide an electronic health record for every person by the year 2014.

To learn more about this program, read *Arizona’s Regional Extension Center: An Opportunity to Make Healthcare Higher in Quality and Lower in Costs through Adoption of Electronic Health Records*, an AzHeC Issue Paper available at www.azhec.org.

About Arizona Health-e Connection (AzHeC):

AzHeC is a statewide non-profit charged with leading Arizona’s establishment of health information infrastructure (HII), including adoption of electronic health records and health information exchange. Now an independent non-profit incorporated in 2007, AzHeC originally grew out of an August 2005 gubernatorial executive order to develop a Roadmap for HII in Arizona. AzHeC has been widely recognized for its collaborative work in moving Arizona’s HII efforts forward through strategic communication and coordination among multiple stakeholders. The organization is a recipient of the coveted Council of State Governments’ Innovations Award and has also been featured in a Harvard Business School case study, in addition to serving as the state’s Regional Extension Center. Learn more at www.azhec.org.

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