

PHR Pilot Program to Launch

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Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries living in Arizona and Utah will be among the first to test drive a pilot program that allows them to access their personal health records online starting this month. They also will be able to add pertinent information such as their medications, pre-existing conditions, and lab results and then electronically share them with their doctors, specialists, and family members.

During a telephone press conference held by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to announce the new initiative, Department of Health and

Mr. Weems said he was unsure how many people could be expected to sign up for the pilot program but noted that the two states have a combined Medicare service population of about one million.

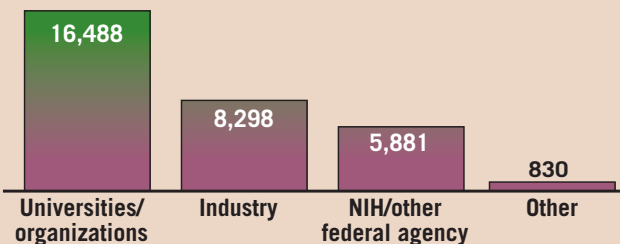
In addition to the development of online PHRs, Medicare is also launching a nationwide program this

month to encourage doctors to enroll in e-prescribing services. Those who participate will receive financial incentives from Medicare, he said.

“This is a real opportunity to demonstrate that health information technology is going to be a real enabler of high-quality health care in the 21st century,” Mr. Weems noted. ■

DATA WATCH

Who Funds Clinical Trials?



Notes: Based on 26,193 open international studies as of Nov. 4, 2008. Many studies have more than one source of funding.
Source: ClinicalTrials.gov

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Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt emphasized that personal health records (PHR) are not like electronic health records that are owned by doctors and other health care providers. Instead, PHRs are completely under the control of patients.

“PHRs can contain a wealth of information entered by patients, their providers, and in some cases their health plan. They can authorize additional users such as a family member or other caregivers. Once a patient sets up a PHR, he or she can then add other information and ask Medicare to populate it with 2 years of previous claims data,” Mr. Leavitt said.

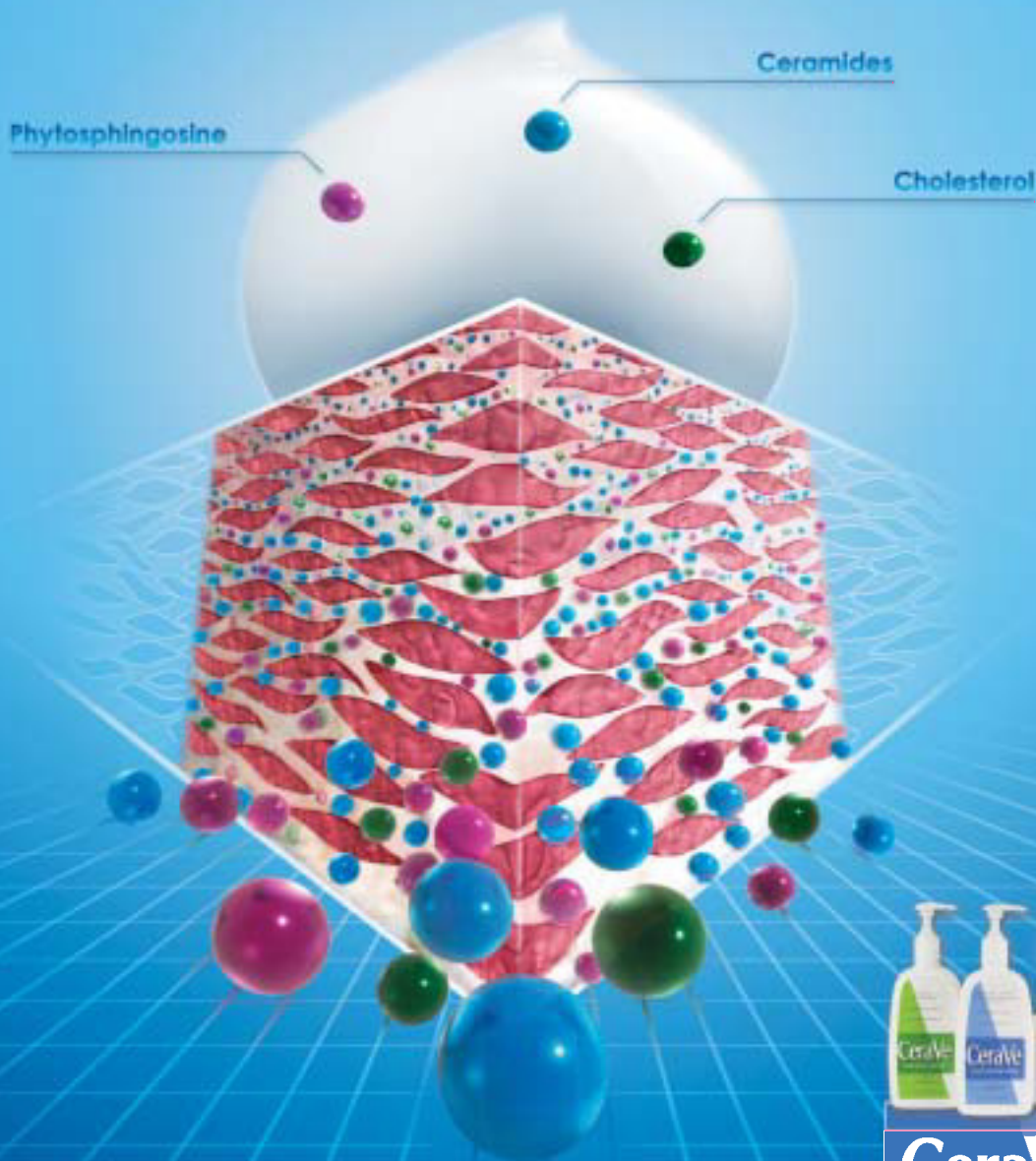
This electronic information would be valuable to both patients and providers, he said. A patient “could have his or her life saved because an emergency room doctor has immediate knowledge of pre-existing conditions or an allergy or current medication. Routine medical visits could be made more convenient, quicker, and efficient by reducing unnecessary paper work and duplicate tests.”

The goal of this initiative, known as the Medicare Personal Health Record Choice Pilot, is to give beneficiaries total autonomy over their health care. CMS Acting Administrator Kerry Weems explained that, toward that end, people will have a choice of four service providers that will assist them in setting up their free PHR online: GoogleHealth, HealthTrio, NoMoreClipboard, and PassportMD.

The four companies were selected by an administrative contractor, Noridian Administrative Services, based in Fargo, N.D. Mr. Weems said all four companies are “already out functioning in the marketplace” and able to provide secure sites for downloading sensitive information. Functionality, ease of use, compliance with standards, accessibility to providers and family members, and an outreach component to draw Medicare participants to their sites and develop PHRs were among selection criteria, he said.

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