

# Health System is first in State to qualify for meaningful use

It started with the Columbia County Health System's vision statement of: "We strive to be a leader in rural healthcare and your partner for optimal health" and taking it into action. Three

effectively use it to benefit the community" said Charlie Button, CEO. After months of research and narrowing the options that best fit the health district's needs, the district was able to put

to make it happen. After all of the modules were installed by the end of 2010, the district was able to focus on compliance of the Stage I, Meaningful Use requirements as outlined by Medicare (CMS). Meaningful Use is a series of outcomes, measures, and statistics, which the system must achieve, in order to receive incentive payments from Medicare. Hospitals are required to meet 14 core measures, 5 out of 10 menu measures, and 15 quality measures. In order to successfully attest compliance, each of the measures must meet a required percentage of usage, ranging from 10% to 80%, and sustained over a 90 day period. The hospital attested to CMS last week, and pending final approval, appears to be the first hospital in the state of Washington to reach this milestone. "This was an incredible accomplishment and a huge credit to the staff at CCHS", stated Button.



(Picture of Emily Rex, RN - entering data into an electronic medical record (EMR) using a mobile wireless computer.)

together a budget and narrow down the selection to two vendors. In late 2009, the hospital district went to the voters for a one year technology levy to fund the IT project. The levy failed by a small margin which led the district to go back out to the voters in early 2010. The board and staff wanted to take more time educating and promoting the solution and the reasons behind their decision. The second time, the levy passed with great support from the com-

At the Washington Rural Hospital Summer Workshop last week, Button was asked to speak about the process CCHS went through to qualify for meaningful use. CCHS should expect incentive payments in the form of accelerated depreciation in the coming months. Meeting stage I objectives qualifies the district for the initial incentive payments but must still achieve the Stage II and Stage III objectives by 2014 in order to prevent reductions in reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid.

years ago, several meetings of a newly formed Information Technology, "Super User Group", charted the path of having a complete electronic medical record (EMR) system throughout the health district.

"Our course was to identify what we needed, how to pay for it, and most importantly, how to

community. CPSI, from Mobile, Alabama, was selected as the vendor of choice and a contract was signed in June, 2010, with an understanding that the first modules would go live on September 1st, 2010.

This was an aggressive time line that required great teamwork, and the district was able