



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **NORTHWEST HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK FORMED TO BRING PATIENT HEALTH AND SAFETY INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

*Industry Leaders Form Regional Health Network Using the Power of the Internet*

**TACOMA, Washington (January 31, 2006)** – Three nationally recognized leaders in health information technology, Northwest Physicians Network (NPN) of Tacoma, and St. Luke's Health System of Boise, supported by Siemens Medical Solutions, have teamed up to create a multi-state health information network to facilitate the exchange of clinical health data across significant distances. The "Northwest Health Information Network (NWHIN)," dubbed "The Network," is a collaborative, regional approach to bettering patient care and eliminating waste in the system. Its development is progressing within the context of federal efforts to link up providers and patients across the country.

The primary goal of The Network is to ensure patients and providers in the Northwest have access to secure, electronic patient information at the right time and the right place, regardless of location or health situation. While many area health providers have begun to transition to electronic medical records, few efforts have been made to make those records interoperable between providers, or across communities. The Network will do just that – connecting existing electronic health information infrastructures to create a regional interoperable framework of information. This framework will "push" clinical information from multiple sources to one point, when the patient or provider needs it most.

"Patient care requires the right information at the right time at the right place," said Dr. Rick MacCornack, Ph.D., Director of Quality Improvement at NPN. "Right now, if a patient is in the emergency room with chest pains, that ER needs to get faxes, printouts, and old charts from each of the patient's health providers before proper care can be delivered. This new project will eliminate all of that – the patient's history and clinical information will be immediately accessible online to both the patient and provider - whether the ER is in Tacoma, Boise or, soon, points in between."

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NPN, which is the largest delegated network of independent, "main street" doctors in the Northwest, has been using Siemens Soarian(R) Community Access since 2004. The system is used to connect physicians throughout the south Puget Sound area to one another, their patients, and to community partners who generate clinical information on patients. Participation is free to patients and costs the provider less than \$40 per month. Access requires only a broadband Internet connection rather than elaborate software packages. To date, more than 200 providers are participating; half are primary care physicians and half are specialty care providers. More than 70,000 online communications have been generated since the project's inception and 150 patients in the community are currently registered users.

St. Luke's Health System, the largest healthcare provider in Idaho, has utilized Siemens Soarian Community Access technology in their market with great success as well. As of December 2005, St. Luke's has rolled out Siemens' Web-based physician portal to more than 1,300 users - including over 350 physicians representing over 100 practices and 640 hospital users.

"This technology has allowed us to improve the quality and safety of patient care," said Sheryl Bell, Director of Information Technology at St. Luke's. "Test results are available immediately from any workstation - inside or outside the hospital. Physicians are notified via e-mail when results are available or when lab values are outside normal ranges. They're able to access patient chart information online, all so that clinical decision making can involve the full scope of patient health information." She continued, "By connecting with NPN across state lines, we're extending the reach of information technology as a tool to improve the patient care experience."

"The Network" between Boise and Tacoma will serve as a "backbone" around which other communities in the region will be able to connect. Providers from Portland, Ore., to Wenatchee, Wash., have expressed interest in connecting to this collaborative effort, moving patient care across the Northwest into the 21st century.

"Interoperability, or the ability to exchange patient health information among disparate clinicians and other authorized participants, continues to be one the greatest barriers to rapid information technology adoption in healthcare," said Janet Dillione, Chief Operating Officer of the Healthcare IT Division at Siemens. "This regional exchange supports the national initiative of building an interoperable health information network and is one of the most innovative and groundbreaking projects we're involved with. While many folks in the healthcare world are talking about connectivity, St. Luke's, NPN and their partners in the Northwest are actually doing it – linking patients and physicians online, breaking down barriers, and eliminating the silos of information that exist between providers to improve the coordination and timeliness of patient care."

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**About Northwest Physicians Network**

Northwest Physicians Network (NPN), based in Tacoma, Washington, is the largest delegated independent physicians association in the Northwest. It has networked together over 430 "main street" doctors in the south Puget Sound area to manage patient care and health for multiple health plans in the state. NPN and its physicians are leaders in the state on efforts ranging from chronic disease management to promoting dental care among under-served youth populations; from wellness programs for employers to administering third party, self-insured benefit programs. More information about NPN can be found at [www.npnwa.net](http://www.npnwa.net).

**About St. Luke's Health System**

St. Luke's Health System is Idaho's largest healthcare provider, with three full-service hospitals in Boise, Meridian and Wood River; 25 outpatient facilities; 600 physicians and 4,200 total employees. St. Luke's treats more than 325,000 patients per year from Idaho and six adjoining states. A leader in the Idaho and Southwest Idaho Community Network, St. Luke's has a partner relationship with nine rural hospitals and a management agreement with four.

**About Siemens**

Siemens Medical Solutions of Siemens AG (NYSE:SI) with headquarters in Malvern, Pennsylvania, and Erlangen, Germany, is one of the largest suppliers to the healthcare industry in the world. The company is known for bringing together innovative medical technologies, healthcare information systems, management consulting, and support services, to help customers achieve tangible, sustainable, clinical and financial outcomes. Employing approximately 31,000 people worldwide and operating in more than 120 countries, Siemens Medical Solutions reported sales of 7.6 billion EUR, orders of 8.6 billion EUR and group profit of 976 million EUR for fiscal 2005 (preliminary figures). More information can be obtained by visiting [www.usa.siemens.com/medical-pressroom](http://www.usa.siemens.com/medical-pressroom).

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