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Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire Awards \$500,000 in Grants to Seven Western Wisconsin Health Care Providers

New Inspiring Healthcare Innovation Grant Program Designed to Improve Health Care in Western Wisconsin

Eau Claire, Wis. (September 13, 2006) – With the goal of improving health care efficiency and effectiveness in Western Wisconsin, Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire has awarded seven area health care providers with grants totaling \$500,000 as part of its new Inspiring Healthcare Innovation Grant Program.

A panel of independent experts assembled by the National Institute of Health Policy (NIHP) evaluated all grant proposals and selected the following recipients and projects:

- **Luther Midelfort (Bloomer)** – Emergency Department redesign to increase the quality and scope of service in this rural area.
- **Chippewa Valley Care Coalition (Eau Claire)** – Educational program to improve the quality and reduce the costs of end-of-life care in the Chippewa Valley.
- **Luther Midelfort (Eau Claire)** – Reconfiguration of health care delivery and tools for patients suffering from chronic diseases and sharing these practices with other interested health care systems.
- **Marshfield Clinic (Eau Claire)** – Mixed-methods study to promote patient participation in colorectal cancer screening, which can help reduce the number of unnecessary deaths and high health care costs.

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- **Memorial Medical Center (Neillsville)** – Computer technology acquisition in the lab to streamline specimen management, promote timely order and results communication and maximize report management capabilities.
- **Sacred Heart Hospital (Eau Claire)** – Bed management system that will streamline patient placement so that the right patient is in the right bed at the right time, assuring patients receive appropriate care as quickly as possible.
- **Vernon Memorial Healthcare (Viroqua)** – Lean Principles training and implementation to improve the quality and efficiency associated with a variety of processes, from billing management to patient service.

“We congratulate each of these providers and anticipate seeing the positive results their initiatives bring to their respective organizations and ultimately the communities they serve,” said Group Health General Manager Peter Farrow. “We are confident that the innovations and insights these grant recipients gain with their projects will cause a ripple effect that will inspire health care providers and benefit patients across the state.”

As part of the grant process, the recipients will report the results and impact of their projects after one year.

The National Institute of Health Policy (NIHP), established in 1998, is a program of the University of St. Thomas’ College of Business. Founded by former Senator David Durenburger, the not-for-profit organization currently has 37 members representing diverse healthcare stakeholders from throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. Through leadership and vision, the NIHP provides a neutral forum for multi-stakeholder collaboration on complex healthcare policy issues.

Founded more than 30 years ago in Wisconsin’s Chippewa Valley, Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire is a nationally recognized, non-profit cooperative now serving 55,000 members in 26 counties in Western Wisconsin. Its mission is to optimize the healthcare of its members through its pooling of health-related resources. Group Health has

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more than 1,400 primary care physicians and more than 2,500 specialists in its network. In four of the last five years, Group Health has ranked as Wisconsin's top health plan in terms of overall member satisfaction, according to data gathered via Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). The third-party CAHPS surveys are designed to offer an indication of how well health plans are meeting their members' expectations. For more information, please visit the cooperative's Web site at www.group-health.com.

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