

HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE (HIE) IN WESTERN NEW YORK

Health care is continuing to go through dramatic change as a result of advances in clinical information technology and legislation designed to improve access to health care (Affordable Care Act, or ACA). While technology is enabling the exchange of clinical information, the ACA is creating health insurance exchanges. These concepts are very different, but sometimes confused.

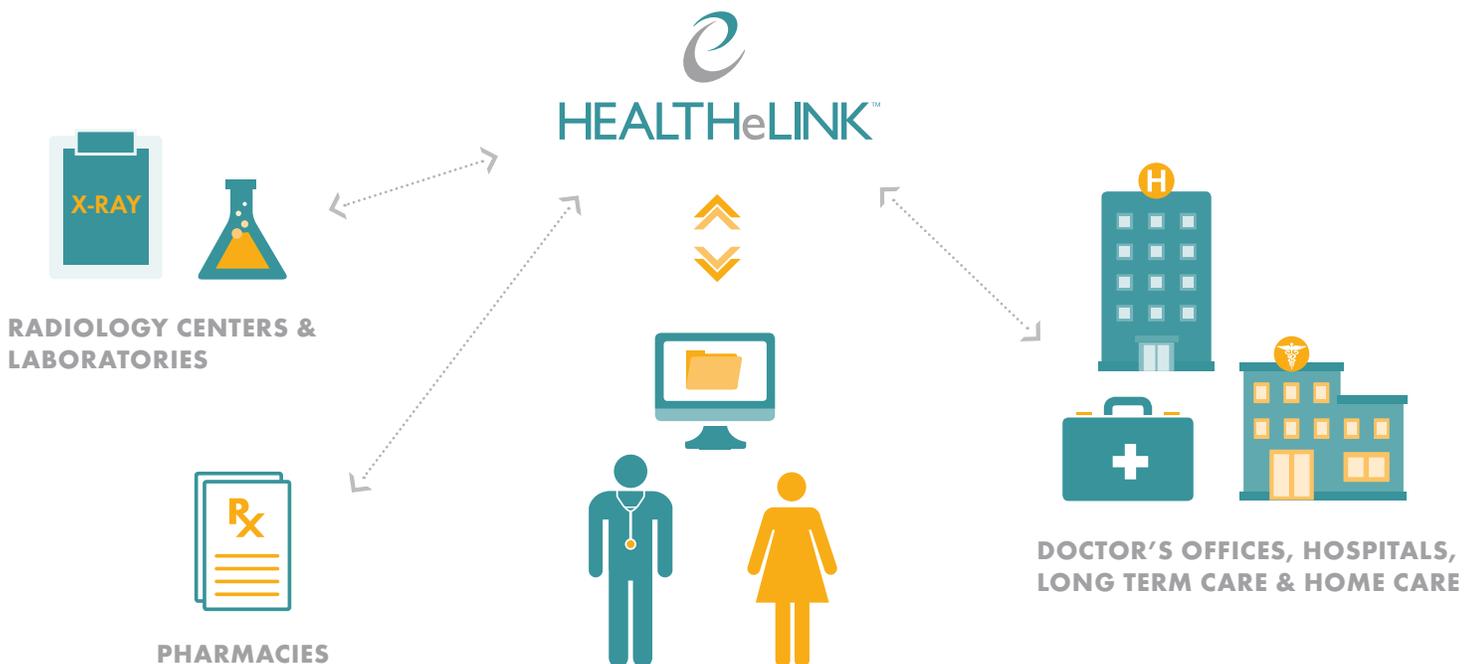
The following provides more information on the operations and functions of the health information exchange in Western New York.

WHAT IS HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE (HIE)?

AS A VERB, HIE is a communication of health information from one provider to another via any number of methods – fax, mail, in-person delivery, a secure electronic connection, etc.



AS A NOUN, HIE is a trusted organization that allows a patient's body of clinical information to follow that patient wherever he or she seeks treatment, linking multiple health care entities that are involved in a patient's care. It is a secure portal designed to ensure only those providers authorized to see a patient's information have access to it.



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- HEALTHeLINK is a collaboration of the region's hospitals, health plans, physician practices, and other health care organizations created to exchange health information in efficient and meaningful ways to improve the delivery of care, enhance outcomes, and help control health care costs.
- HEALTHeLINK allows doctors to send and receive a patient's clinical data electronically, thus having the data essentially follow the patient to whatever health care setting he/she goes to within the eight-county Western New York region. Because of this, physicians have the ability to query data on patients regardless of where they have been treated previously.
- HEALTHeLINK provides physicians with the tools they need to give their patients better coordinated health care and enhanced safety. In turn, improved quality of care can reduce preventable medical errors that often lead to more tests and treatments, which also means additional costs. Having immediate access to the most up-to-date medical information available can also lead to a reduction in duplicate laboratory and radiology testing, which translates into more cost savings and time-saving convenience for patients.
- Ultimately the goal is for each health information exchange to be able to share patient health information through a state health information network – State Health Information Network of New York (SHIN-NY) – and through a Nationwide Health Information Network (NWHIN) developed with the funding support of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Interoperability is the ability for different systems and organizations to work together and exchange data.
 - This exchange of information can take place at the most basic one-to-one level by pushing data from one organization, such as a hospital lab, to another like, a physician's office. However, at this level, that hospital lab would need to create and maintain an individual connection to each physician office it works with.
 - An organization such as HEALTHeLINK makes interoperability more efficient. A data source, such as a hospital lab, only needs to connect to HEALTHeLINK once to enable the delivery of its data to all practices. This is also the same for physician practices – one connection to HEALTHeLINK allows them to receive data from all of their data source connections. HEALTHeLINK enables doctors to access the most current medical information on their patients who have consented regardless of the source.
 - This interoperability also leads to improved care coordination and practice workflow because HEALTHeLINK enables the secure communication and transfer of relevant clinical information directly between doctors from different practices with different record systems for referral purposes.
- HEALTHeLINK also assists medical practices to achieve clinical transformation by integrating their electronic medical records and health information exchange technology into their daily office process.