



N.Y. experiment tests healthcare reform

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An experiment in New York's Adirondacks will provide a real-world test of several concepts adopted by national healthcare reform, health officials said.

Six major insurance companies said they will spend an extra \$7 per patient every month -- about \$8 million to \$10 million annually -- to get doctors in New York's most northern area to adopt electronic records and set targets for improving the health of their patients, the Albany (N.Y.) Times Union reported Tuesday.

Health officials said if the changes work, doctors will earn more money as hospitalizations are reduced, while the overall cost of healthcare in the Adirondacks is reduced.

The landmark project -- two years in the making -- resulted from a summit to deal with the Adirondacks losing 20 primary care doctors for an 8 percent decline from 2001-2005.

The experiment emphasizes preventive care and effective management of chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and subsequent rehospitalizations from complications.

The initiative includes payments to help doctors coordinate care, alert patients when they are due for treatment and encourage electronic tracking of patients -- activities currently not reimbursed. Doctors must show they are improving the health of their patients by hitting specific benchmarks such as having no more than 35 percent of patients with a blood pressure of 140/90 or worse.

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