

MaineHealth  
**Accountable Care  
Organization**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Paul Santomenna (207) 661-3806

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**New Grant Funding Aims to Enhance Care for Patients in Rural Maine with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease**

Portland, ME – The MaineHealth Accountable Care Organization and the Chronic Disease Program at the MaineHealth Center for Health Improvement are pleased to announce that Harvard Pilgrim Health Care's Quality Grants Program has awarded the ACO a one-year, \$88,000 grant to build the capacity of primary care providers to diagnose and manage patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD refers to two long-term diseases that cause breathing problems, emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It's the third most common cause of death in the United States.

The project will create online learning modules on diagnosing and managing COPD in the primary care setting, develop a guideline for care and referral, and pilot the use of telehealth to give patients in a rural region access to specialty pulmonary services. Primary care providers from Western Maine Health in Norway and specialists from Chest Medicine Associates in South Portland have agreed to participate in the telehealth pilot.

"Building strong and lasting partnerships between primary and specialty care is central to the design of this project," says Dr. Jeffrey Aalberg, the MaineHealth ACO's chief medical officer. "We expect those partnerships to bring significant benefits to rural patients with COPD. Consults with specialists will be available to them locally using telehealth technology. And their primary care providers will learn the latest evidence-based protocols for treating COPD in the primary care setting."

The development of every component of this project will involve both primary care providers and specialists. The MaineHealth Chronic Disease Program will provide day-to-day management with clinical, administrative and fiscal support from the MaineHealth ACO.

**The MaineHealth Accountable Care Organization** is a network of approximately 1,500 Maine and New Hampshire health care providers working with Medicare, private health insurers and other partners to measurably increase the quality and decrease the cost of health care.

**The Chronic Disease Program, MaineHealth Center for Health Improvement**, provides support to MaineHealth hospitals and practices in their efforts to decrease clinical variation and achieve a high standard of care. The program creates and provides clinical tools, in-service trainings, patient education, and resource materials.

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