



## **Mass. Firms Want In On Demand for Health Info Exchange**

By: Julie M. Donnelly  
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As Massachusetts gets ready to deploy federal and state funds to set up a health information exchange (HIE) to link electronic medical records across the state, companies are clamoring to be a part of the action.

“There is definitely a gold rush out there,” said Marshall Votta, director of government affairs at Cambridge-based NaviNet Inc. The company, which is best-known for providing billing and administrative services, is expanding to add clinical data exchange to its arsenal. The company has offered its Web portal free to each of the 50 states, and its business model relies on payment from insurers per transaction, not providers.

NaviNet plans to increase head count by almost 25 percent this year, adding 50 positions to its current roster of 216 employees. Votta said that the company may add services that would be paid for by the states, as part of the health information exchanges. The company is currently tracking developments in 15 states in order to potentially bid to become a vendor.

Massachusetts was awarded \$11.5 million by the federal government to implement an HIE, but has not received the funds as of yet. The state must first file a completed plan for the HIE and officials at the state Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) said that they expect to issue RFPs to potential vendors in 2011. The state also has \$12 million in state funds that were part of an original appropriation of \$25 million two years ago. Budget cuts reduced that figure to \$15 million, and so far \$3 million has been spent to set up the administrative entity charged with establishing the statewide HIE, called the Massachusetts e-Health Institute. The state has until now been part of a partial exchange — that doctors pay to subscribe to — called the New England Health Exchange Network.

“What we’ve learned is that workforce development is important, so we’ll spend some of the money on that. If there aren’t enough workers, its going to create a bottleneck,” said David Martin, legislative director at the EOHHS said.

This is good news for Westwood-based Meditech, which is planning to add 10 percent to its current head count of almost 3,000 this year. The company just announced last week that it will join with Northeastern University to offer health information curriculum to health sciences students, including future nurses.

Some of Meditech’s clients that use its provider-centered software, including Caritas Christi Health Care, have applied to be part of the so-called regional extension centers, which will help doctors at small practices adopt EMRs and join the health information exchanges. The federal government has committed at least \$640 million nationwide to set up approximately 70 extension centers, as part of the stimulus package.

GE Healthcare also sees a big opportunity as the country moves towards the goal of linking electronic medical records across institutions. Last September, the company established a new division called e-Health Solutions, which is based in Boston. The company now has 250 employees in Boston spread between the new division and the business solutions division, which offers electronic medical records and revenue cycle management for doctors.

Earl Jones, the general manager for the e-Health Solutions division, could not give an exact number for the jobs it plans to add in this area, but said, "Yes, we are hiring. Would you like a job?"