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Houston Methodist part of first pilot in nation to bridge electronic gap for automated case reporting to public health agencies

HOUSTON-(Nov. 14, 2018)-In collaboration with the Houston Health Department and Epic (electronic medical records company), Houston Methodist is the first hospital system in eight U.S. pilot sites to successfully test and launch an approach to electronic case reporting (eCR) that can automatically send case reports directly from a hospital to public health agencies. Reporting such cases is critical for disease surveillance and detection of possible outbreaks and trends.

Local and state health departments require hospitals to report cases of certain communicable and/or infectious diseases that are regularly tracked. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with members of the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists, chose five initial reportable conditions for the pilot sites to electronically report - chlamydia, gonorrhea, pertussis, salmonella and Zika.

"We've worked tirelessly with city health officials and our electronic medical records vendor to improve public health surveillance. Digital Bridge partners have created an innovative approach that allows our hospital system to reduce the burden on our health care providers for meeting public health reporting requirements," said Roberta Schwartz, Chief Innovation Officer and Executive Vice President, Houston Methodist Hospital.

The eCR approach was designed by key stakeholders in health care, public health and health information technology under the Digital Bridge collaborative. Prior to electronic case reporting, communication between hospital systems and various levels of health departments was not as timely or streamlined.

Other locations that partnered with Digital Bridge to pilot electronic case reporting are in California, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York and Utah.

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