# Briefing

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While the rest of the world rushes by on the information superhighway, healthcare has been sitting at a truckstop having a second cup of coffee. But that is changing. Driven by needs for information systems that support clinical and management decision making, link multiple sites of care, streamline financial and other transactions, and measure outcomes, healthcare organizations are moving quickly to the "on ramps" of the information age.

Healthcare executives no longer doubt that information systems can enable them to manage care and risk through computerized medical records and to accomplish administrative savings. But administrators still struggle with questions about how to implement the systems they need and the true costs and savings they can realize.

To help answer some of the questions, this issue describes how three organizations are working toward visionary information systems. Provenant Health Partners continues to build on its information system, which connects its integrated delivery network of three Denver-area hospitals and several outpatient facilities (p. 44).

In rural Iowa, Sisters of Mercy Health Corporation and the Mercy Health Centers of Central Iowa have spearheaded the Midwest Rural Telemedicine Consortium to improve access and quality of health services (p. 48).

Genesys Health System in Flint, MI, is designing a computerized patient record system to supply information needed for its patient-focused care hospital, managed care organization, and physician network (p. 51). We believe you will learn from these projects, which are all in progress yet ahead of many other organizations' work.

## CATHOLIC IDENTITY

"What is your vision for the future of your healthcare ministry?" "Which of your foundational beliefs and values should be preserved in a new relationship?" Such provocative questions are contained in a new CHA document (p. 23) that will help your organization assess the issues related to Catholic identity in affiliations with non-Catholic partners.

## INTEGRATED DELIVERY

Is your system ready to develop integrated delivery networks? To find out, take a look at the criteria and procedures the SSM Health Care System in St. Louis uses for IDN participation (p. 18). And you will find additional practical information in Assistant Editor Phil Rheinecker's report of a University of North Carolina conference, where speakers describe their own experiences with strategic alliances (p. 68).

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CHA's Advanced Institute, a component of the Center for Leadership Excellence, is developing learning opportunities for senior executives (see p. 21). Programing will be based on the competencies that distinguish outstanding leaders in Catholic healthcare and the motivation that drives leaders. The competencies, revealed in a recent CHA study, will be introduced formally at CHA's assembly in June (see pp. 31-42) and in the June issue of *Health Progress*.

## HP UPDATES

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses has recognized *Health Progress* for two 1993 articles that denote "nursing's positive influence in a changing healthcare environment": "On the Right Path" by Judy London, which addressed collaborative care management (June), and "Nursing's Renaissance" by Assistant Editor Michelle Hey, on Tucson-based Carondelet Health Care's continuum of care (October).

"Communication Strategies" is the new name for our regular column, formerly called "Marketing." This new title more accurately reflects Catholic healthcare organizations' emphasis on creative communications that build lasting relationships with their constituencies.

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