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Aetna, Microsoft To Partner on Personal Health Records Project

On Monday, officials from Aetna and Microsoft **announced plans** to partner for a new program that will allow about six million Aetna members access to their personal health records online, the **AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune** reports (Murphy, *AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 10/22). The project will launch in November.

Under the program, Aetna members who currently have PHRs offered by the health insurer can transfer their medical information to Microsoft HealthVault accounts (Rubenstein, *Wall Street Journal*, 10/22).

The program will not increase costs for Aetna members who participate. The program will follow "Connecting for Health" patient privacy guidelines developed this year by Microsoft and other online companies that offer PHR services (*AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 10/22).

Aetna plans to extend the program to more of its 17 million members in 2009 (*Wall Street Journal*, 10/22).

Peter Neupert, vice president for Microsoft Health Solutions Group, said that Aetna members who participate in the program will have complete control over their PHRs and that physicians and Microsoft employees will not have the ability to access medical information without members' consent. Microsoft is "very confident and vigilant about providing security for this data," he said.

Mark Bertolini, president of Aetna, said that the program will provide members with "continuous access" to their medical information. He said, "Because we don't have a national health information technology network, this will stand as a first-generation of that kind of capability," adding, "We can avoid duplicate testing, we can avoid mistakes that occur as a result of not understanding the member's complete condition."

According to Bertolini, the program will reduce costs for the company. He said, "Right now, we spend tens of millions of dollars answering the phone telling providers if a person is eligible or what their benefits are," adding, "With the availability of this information, those calls go away" (*AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 10/22).

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