Understanding the Electronic Health Record

By Amy Bentley

WHAT IS AN ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD?
An electronic health record (EHR) is a computerized collection of a patient’s health records. It includes information such as age, health history, medications, allergies, immunization status, lab test results, hospital discharge instructions and billing information. These digital records can be shared easily among a patient’s health care providers, so if one doctor orders a test, for example, all the patient’s doctors can see the results. “It has all the data that we generate around a patient’s care,” says Dr. Feaster, chief medical information officer for CHOC. “The goal is that when you come for care, all the information needed is in a computer rather than a paper chart stored somewhere.”

BENEFITS TO YOUR CHILD
“The greatest benefit now is improving the quality and safety of patient care,” says Dr. Feaster. “Through the use of electronic orders and standardized order sets, we can implement what we all agree is the best way to care for a certain disease or patient. The EHR also facilitates bar coding of medications, blood, breast milk and lab tests. This ensures that the correct drug or product is given to the correct patient, thus reducing or eliminating medical errors.”

PARENT ACCESS IS COMING
Only health care providers have had electronic access in the past. Coming soon to CHOC is a new patient portal that will allow parents to access their child’s information by computer, tablet or smartphone. “Parents will be able to request medication renewals, make appointments and perhaps other functions. They will be able to direct their medical information to other providers if they change specialists, for example. We plan to have this live by late spring or early summer and we will help parents sign up. More details will be forthcoming,” says Dr. Feaster.

Top 11%
CHOC’s ranking among hospitals nationwide for EHR use to improve health care

Top 2%
CHOC’s anticipated ranking by the end of 2014 after achieving HIMSS’ top level of EHR adoption

72%
Percent of office-based physicians nationwide using some kind of EHR system in 2012

50 YEARS OF THANKS
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