

# PHYSICIAN PRACTICES & AMBULATORY CARE

## South Carolina IPA goes beyond e-mail security

BY BERNIE MONEGAIN, *Editor*

CHARLESTON, SC - United Physicians of Charleston, one of the largest independent physician associations in the country, is zipping up its communications in order to achieve its goal of clinical integration.

The IPA will employ encrypted communications technology and other Web-based services from MaxMD, a company based in Fort Lee, N.J., that has the exclusive rights to the .md Web domain.

MaxMD provides encrypted

communications and system interoperability that are critical to United Physicians' goals of clinical integration, according to Beth Crowder, executive director of the IPA.

"Most importantly, the technology is very affordable and does not require costly interfaces for all our physicians to communicate securely" Crowder said. "Unlike other CI programs we've seen, ours is quick, easy and inexpensive to get physicians connected."

The IPA is made up of 800

→ **THE NEWS:** South Carolina IPA will encrypt all outgoing e-mails.

→ **WHAT IT MEANS:** The IPA is moving forward with its goal of clinical integration.

**SECURITY** see page 26

## SECURITY

*Continued from page 23*

physicians in more than 300 practices. Together they serve 600,000 patients. United Physicians is the first IPA to roll out the MaxMD solution group-wide.

Crowder anticipates the clinical integration of the practices will produce significant savings for every practice while enabling secure communication among patients, physicians and insurers. That tight communication loop means compliance with federal HIPAA law - the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Many practices in the IPA have not yet implemented a fully functioning electronic health record system, Crowder said.

"The beauty of this program is that even without 100 percent of physicians using an EHR, we can still implement clinical integration now," she said.

MaxMD President and CEO Scott Finlay describes the MaxMD technology as "the connective tissue" that binds all the elements needed to achieve clinical integration, including electronic health records and a clinical data repository.

"We provide the first and only platform that allows both patients and providers to ini-

ate secure information exchange via e-mail," Finlay said.

The .md domain, available exclusively via MaxMD, is designed to facilitate communication over the Internet and is the only interoperable encryption solution of its kind, according to Finlay.

"At first people don't comprehend our architecture and our approach," Finlay said. "This is beyond secure e-mail. Instead of trying to engineer interoperability at the sub-domain level and undertaking massive re-engineering, we are approaching this one level higher, from the top-level domain."

Last year, the Southern Medical Association, based in Birmingham, Ala., partnered with MaxMD to offer physicians Internet communications that includes a domain name, a single page Web site, and a secure e-mail account for \$150 per year.

"In today's world of technology, physicians need a strong presence on the Web," said Randy Glick, CIO at the association.

Bundling the .md domain registration with a free Web card and a HIPAA compliant e-mail address makes it possible for physicians to have a strong Web presence, Glick said.

At United Physicians, Crowder said, a six-year quest for clinical integration is about to come to fruition.

"This thing they'll be able to do because it won't turn their work upside down," she said. ■



Scott Finlay