HealthPartners and VitalSims partner to improve diabetes care
SiMCare Health medical education programs replicate real-life scenarios to teach safer, more individualized and effective care for patients with chronic diseases.

MINNEAPOLIS – August 14, 2012 – HealthPartners and VitalSims are partnering to improve care for patients with chronic diseases through a joint venture, SiMCare Health. The first SiMCare program – SiMCare Diabetes – will help providers ensure that patients get the best possible care while also reducing overall medical costs.

Twelve years in the making, SiMCare Health medical education programs are web-based accelerated learning simulations based on thousands of actual patient encounters. HealthPartners Institute for Education and Research developed SiMCare Diabetes with federal grant money from the National Institutes for Health and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and in collaboration with the University of Minnesota.

SiMCare Diabetes trains physicians, advanced practice providers, pharmacists and other health care professionals to effectively diagnose and treat type 1 and type 2 diabetes. In helping these ‘virtual’ patients better manage their diabetes, providers decide when and how often to bring patients into the clinic, learn ways to use insulin more effectively and discover when other medications should be prescribed. They also get a better understanding of when patients should undergo diagnostic tests or lab work and when a patient should see a specialist for additional care. Each case challenges the learner to help the patient achieve their individualized care goals within six ‘virtual’ months in order to pass.

“While developing SiMCare Diabetes, we evaluated real life situations and asked, ‘What are the major things doctors aren’t doing that they should be?’” said lead product developer JoAnn Sperl-Hillen, MD, an internist and senior investigator with HealthPartners Institute for Education and Research. “The 18 patient cases we ended up with are packed with as many learning practices as possible to address the gaps we identified.”

In addition to improved health, patients with well-managed diabetes have lower health care costs compared to those who don’t. A recent analysis by the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics found that patients with diabetes under 65 and covered by private health insurance had health care expenses of about $12,000 per year. Patients who did not have their diabetes under control could experience costs of more than $100,000 and were at greater risk of heart attack, stroke, loss of vision or limb amputation.
Partnering with VitalSims to market SiMCare

VitalSims is a Twin Cities-based company that promotes and advances best practices in medicine through the latest technologies in health care education. Chris Duncan, CEO of VitalSims and SiMCare Health, points to a recent study published in *The American Journal of Medicine* that found 35 percent of patients with newly diagnosed diabetes are improperly cared for.

“My hope for SiMCare Diabetes is to provide the training and education that health care providers need to improve outcomes for these patients,” Duncan said.

SiMCare Diabetes is currently in use by HealthPartners Medical Group and several residency programs across the country. It was tested in 19 primary care residency programs with high satisfaction rates, and studies conducted through HealthPartners Institute for Education and Research found that use of SiMCare Diabetes improved physician preparedness and patient outcomes.

Andrew Nelson, executive director of research at HealthPartners, says SiMCare Health is an important part of The Institute’s goal of translating high-quality clinical research into products that impact patient care.

“Partnering with VitalSims to market SiMCare Diabetes and other programs as they’re developed will help us spread our research and development in ways that improve health, improve patient experience and ultimately lower health care costs,” said Nelson.

Jay Schrankler, executive director of the Office for Technology Commercialization at the University of Minnesota says the school values its partnerships with industry and is excited to see HealthPartners move this technology toward commercialization.

"SiMCare products could contribute to training the next generation of doctors, nurses, and pharmacists in caring for chronic diseases," said Schrankler.

SiMCare Diabetes will soon be launched internationally, and within the next few months, SiMCare Health has plans to expand its product line to include hypertension and additional diseases. A demonstration video of SiMCare Diabetes is available on simcarehealth.com and health care professionals are also encouraged to register online for a free simulation case.

HealthPartners Institute for Education and Research

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