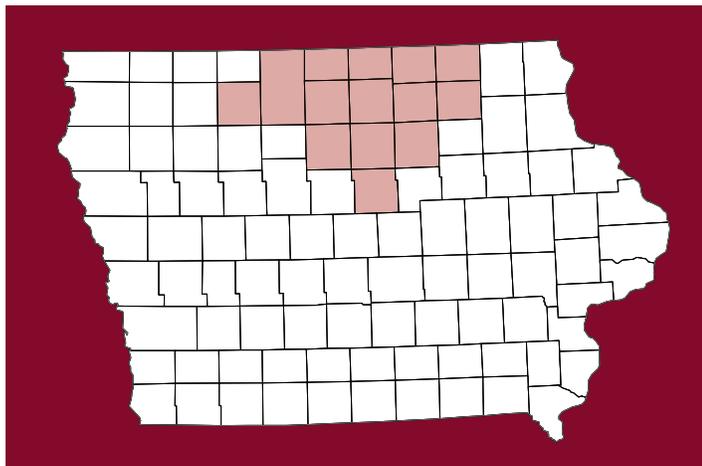


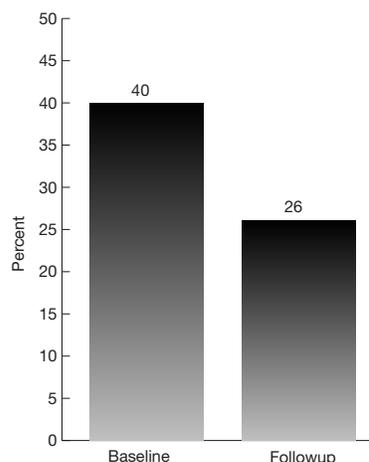
Network of Rural Hospitals in Iowa Redesign Patient Care Workflow to Use Electronic Health Records



In addition to electronically storing patient's information in an accessible and standardized fashion, electronic health records (EHRs) can support a variety of more sophisticated functions, including clinical decision support (CDS), which facilitates clinicians' decisionmaking, through the integration of patient-specific information and established clinical guidelines. Although EHRs have been shown to be a useful tool for improving health care quality and safety, health care organizations have come to recognize that just having an EHR does not equate to quality improvement. Health care organizations must rethink the processes of patient care as they implement EHRs to ensure that patient care workflow matches EHR functions, if improvements in health care quality are to be realized. A regional referral hospital in rural Iowa did that, illustrating the synergy between EHRs and the redesigning of care processes and how such synergy can generate benefits for patients. The following are examples of their successes:

- Pharmacists from the rural referral center hospital now use the EHR system to remotely check medication dosing and drug alerts for critical access hospitals in their network, helping to avoid medical errors in pharmacy care for hospitalized patients in rural Iowa.
- CDS featuring automatic alerts and notifications within EHRs helped improve the timeliness of indwelling catheter¹ removal, thereby decreasing urinary tract infections (UTIs) after surgery, a complication that can result in worsened patient outcomes and longer hospitalizations (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. FEWER POST-ELECTIVE-SURGERY URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS OCCUR AFTER WORKFLOW REDESIGN TO USE ELECTRONIC ALERTS AND REMINDERS IN EHRs



Note: Baseline period was April 2008 through March 2009. The CDS process to help prevent UTIs was implemented during January-June 2009. The followup period was annualized to 1 year from 6 months of data for the period July-December 2009.

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¹ A catheter that is inserted into the bladder and allowed to remain.

