



News Release

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Clinical research network leverages big data across Wisconsin and Midwest

A swell of medical information will soon be at the fingertips of researchers across the Midwest as major health care institutions partner in a massive, multi-state network. The Greater Plains Collaborative, part of the Patient-Centered Clinical Research Network (PCORnet), will link 10 medical centers, including the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), in seven states, to build a data set from electronic medical records that will be used to contribute to new research in the fields of breast cancer, obesity and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease).

A \$7 million grant from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute will fund the collaborative for 18 months. Nearly \$500,000 will go to the Clinical and Translational Science

Institute's (CTSI) biomedical informatics team at MCW to establish the process, methods and system for sharing information in collaboration with the grant partners.

“To establish interoperable systems across all institutions is challenging, calling for parallel systems for collecting and managing data, governance structures, common dictionaries of terms, and standard operating procedures,” said Brad Taylor, the principal investigator on the grant at MCW. “Once that data can be shared, this network will provide physicians with patient information that otherwise would not be accessible, which offers evidence for the treatments with the best potential for patients”.

Patient information in the network will be “de-identified,” meaning it will not contain any of the elements that could be used to identify a person.

CTSI is part of a national consortium of top medical research institutions. Working together, the CTSI institutions are committed to improve human health by streamlining science, transforming training environments and improving the conduct, quality and dissemination of clinical and translational research. The CTSI program is led by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health.