Dear Referral Partner:

We're introducing a better way to exchange referrals, care summaries, and similar patient data with your office by implementing Direct Secure Messaging (DSM).

Going forward, we prefer to use this method to share patient referral data instead of fax, courier, post, etc. for the following reasons:

- CMS is advocating DSM as its preferred method for electronically sharing patient data. The DSM method is considered to be superior to fax, courier, post and other traditional methods of clinical data exchange.
- DSM is highly efficient and convenient because it allows us to send and receive referrals directly from/to the patient record in our EHR.
- The referral we send you via DSM will automatically update the patient record in your EHR without the inconvenience of retrieving the information from a third-party system and/or keying-in data from a hard-copy document

To begin exchanging referrals via DSM, we need to know your Direct Secure Messaging Address. The Address we're seeking, and which we'd like you to share with us, looks like an email address with a unique format along these lines: smithmd@direct.yourpractice.com.

Many providers already have Direct Secure Messaging Addresses through their EHR vendor but don't realize it. Here are a few options for determining your Direct Address associated with your EHR:

- Enter the following search phrase into your EHR's search field or knowledge base: "Direct Address" or "Direct Secure Messaging." The search should return guidance on where to locate your Direct Address or how to request it through your EHR. EHRs that carry ONC's Certification for 2014 and/or 2015 should be equipped with Direct Secure Messaging and should make a Direct Address available to you.
- Contact your EHR customer support representative and request a Direct Secure Messaging Address. Most customer support reps should be knowledgeable about Direct Secure Messaging. If they are not, suggest a conversation with the EHR's coordinator of CMS attestation programs, e.g.: Meaningful use / MACRA-MIPs. Direct Secure Messaging is a required measure for qualifying for payment incentive programs and as such individuals involved in these programs will be familiar with DSM.

If you don't have an EHR or if your EHR does not support Direct Secure Messaging, you can obtain a Direct Address through alternative channels:
- One option is to contact your local health information exchange or Regional Extension Center (REC). Many of these entities provision Direct Addresses or can guide you to an authorized Direct Address issuer.
- Another option is to contact an accredited health information service provider (HISP). Accredited HISPs are the exclusive issuers of Direct Addresses for use on the DirectTrust health information exchange network. We recommend DataMotion but you can select any accredited HISP listed on the DirectTrust website.

We believe that DSM is an important method of referral exchange that is gaining widespread adoption as fax and similar clinical data delivery processes become outmoded. We encourage you to embrace this new way of sharing clinical data and collaborating toward better outcomes for our patients.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Brief FAQ

What is Direct Secure Messaging?
DSM is a highly secure and interoperable data exchange method that is ideal for sharing clinical data. DSM delivers patient data by incorporating standard email transport, internet-security standards, and EHR interoperability protocols (HL7). The method is superior to fax and traditional referral exchange options because it is compatible with EHR data interface specifications and can therefore update patient records automatically with all relevant referral information (e.g.: problem(s), medications, allergies, etc.) DSM is based on standard email and operates with similar efficiency and ubiquity.

How does Direct Secure Messaging Work?
DSM uses the same standard, internet-based transport protocols as email (SMTP) and as such its reach is as expansive as the internet itself and its operating mode parallels that of widely deployed email solutions. DSM's extraordinary security and EHR interoperability capabilities differentiate it from email and optimize it for clinical data exchange across a health IT landscape complicated by disparate systems that are not designed to share data. To maximize privacy and security against breach, DSM incorporates strong encryption. Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) is used to enforce additional confidentiality, message integrity, and overall assurance that messages are exchanged between intended senders and recipients.

Direct Secure Messages are tethered to specialized "Direct Addresses" that look like email addresses. These Addresses are typically formatted along these lines: XXXX@direct.yourhospital.org, and are bound to a DirectTrust-compliant (X.509) digital certificate which acts in the capacity of a drivers' license, enabling messages to transit the DirectTrust network. Messages are completed point-to-point by the telephony equivalent of a central switch (The DirectTrust Accredited Trust Bundle) which identifies authorized senders and recipients and routes messages accordingly.

The nationwide DirectTrust health information exchange comprises network operators know as Health Information Service Providers (HISPs) which are authorized by the DirectTrust governing body to: qualify Direct Messaging users, issue Direct Messaging Addresses, provide an access point to the DirectTrust network, and participate in forwarding messages across the network. The concept of a HISP is very

Why do I need Direct Secure Messaging?
DSM is rapidly becoming the preferred method for exchanging referrals, care transitions, progress notes, studies, and similar clinical data traditionally transmitted by fax. Beginning in 2014, CMS required certified EHRs to implement Direct Secure Messaging and incentivized providers to use it to achieve Meaningful Use objectives and related payment incentives. While CMS incentive payment programs (e.g.: MU3, MACRA-MIPs, APMs) continue to drive adoption of Direct Secure Messaging, convenience, cost savings, and efficiencies make DSM a better referral method in terms of clinical effectiveness and return on investment.