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*Life in Discovery*

For Immediate Release:

**Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is First University in Illinois to Arm Students with Advanced Medical Diagnostic Tool**

***Goal is to help healthcare industry prevent diagnostic error, improve quality of care***

NORTH CHICAGO, IL – Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is the first health sciences institution in Illinois to provide its students with an advanced web-based software named Isabel that will assist medical students – future doctors – as they learn to diagnose illnesses and physical disorders.

How big a problem is diagnostic error?

According to research conducted by the VA Medical Center of Northport, New York, diagnostic error is twice as common as prescription error. Most medical error studies find 10-30 percent of mistakes are in diagnosis as revealed by a study at Cook County, Illinois John H. Stroger Hospital. Additionally, another review by Stroger Hospital researchers of 53 autopsy studies found an average rate of 24 percent missed diagnoses.

Diagnostic errors are often the result of a physician not considering all possible options, particularly in what is known as premature closure – when a doctor considers a patient’s symptoms to be evidence of one specific diagnosis and then stops considering others. This rate of misdiagnosis means that patients are often treated for the wrong condition.

Isabel is a decision support tool and knowledge system that starts at the same point that a patient’s journey frequently begins—with symptoms, signs and results of tests. Isabel’s interface enables doctors to quickly input a patient’s key signs and symptoms, and then a list of differential diagnoses, including bioterrorism diagnoses, are instantly provided, determined by the context and meaning of the clinical terms entered, rather than by keywords alone.

Isabel includes information on more than 10,000 diseases and 4,500 drugs and is updated almost daily, with major updates every three to six months.

“Isabel searches through medical texts and journals and provides the clinician – the expert – with diagnoses to consider. It actually reminds the doctors of other diagnoses that he may not have remembered,” said Joseph Britto, M.D., one of the cofounders of Isabel. The other cofounder of Isabel Healthcare Systems is Jason Maude. The company is named after Maude’s young daughter, who almost died after a potentially fatal illness was not recognized by a physician.

At RFUMS, Isabel is a mandatory component of training for the University’s Chicago Medical School students and the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine students. Furthermore, all RFUMS students and faculty, including the College of Health Professions, have access to it for the purpose of educational instruction and learning.

John Tomkowiak, M.D., M.O.L, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Director of Interprofessional Clinical Education and Simulation at RFUMS, explains that data base search and inquiry systems have been used by professionals in law and finance, but these persons generally have time to research issues behind the scenes. But in medicine, doctors often are left to use this technology at the point of care, potentially in front of patients.

Some physicians believe that their patients will think they don’t know anything if they use a diagnostic reminder system, but the truth is that physicians do forget to consider some of the possibilities, some of the time.

“It doesn’t mean we aren’t excellent at what we do, it means we are being asked to do a Herculean task by sorting through thousands of diagnoses in our head,” said Dr. Tomkowiak. “It’s testament to the outstanding health sciences training that we currently have that we do as well as we do, but we could do better.”

Dr. Tomkowiak says one of the hardest skills to teach clinicians is the ability to reason in a clinically oriented context – it is this skill that differentiates the average clinician from the excellent one. “Educators have consistently looked for approaches to not only teach this essential skill, but to assess it. With Isabel we can do both.”

He says the University is better preparing students by exposing them to a technology that is gaining momentum in the clinical setting. Having them learn how to use it and understand its benefits and limitations will allow them to be better prepared to practice when they are on their own.

Dr. Tomkowiak also says the software allows the University a vehicle to demonstrate how to reason thoroughly with clinical problems. “It provides a rich context in which we can embed learning and discussions concerning clinical issues.”

“Not many medical schools have the innovative thinking that Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science has,” says Dr. Britto, “If we are going to train the physicians of tomorrow, we need to train them in the digital world, and that’s what the University is now doing as a national academic leader.”

### ***About Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science***

*Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is a national leader in interprofessional medical and healthcare education, comprising the Chicago Medical School, College of Health Professions, Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine and School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.*

*Rosalind Franklin University recently received approval for its new doctoral program in Interprofessional Healthcare Studies – the first in Illinois – and has launched a new master in science program in Psychology Clinical Counseling in fall 2008.*

*There are more than 16,000 RFUMS graduates in the United States and worldwide.*