

TACOMA, Wash., Sept. 16, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Tacoma-based Franciscan Health System introduces Franciscan Virtual Urgent Care, a healthcare service that allows anyone in Franciscan's service area to receive care for a wide range of common conditions 24/7 via phone or video chat on smartphone, tablet or PC. Franciscan offers the full spectrum of primary and specialty care, and now virtual urgent care extends that same quality care to the public any time of day or night, from the comfort of their own home. Franciscan is also one of the first hospital systems in the U.S. to provide virtual urgent care to the public.

Franciscan Virtual Urgent Care will cost \$35 per visit, which is less than the cost of an average office visit and a fraction of the average cost of an emergency room visit.

"We tested the Franciscan Virtual Urgent Care with our own employees before expanding it to the public, so we know this model of care delivery works," said Franciscan Health System Chief Operating Officer Cliff Robertson, M.D. "As our health care system evolves, patients have more control over their health care dollars. We are innovating to provide care more efficiently, conveniently and at a lower cost. Franciscan Virtual Urgent Care gives patients more choices for how and when they access their medical care."

For the last four years, Franciscan has partnered with Seattle-based Carena to provide virtual urgent care to Franciscan employees as part of their health benefits package. In July 2012

, Franciscan expanded the service to provide after-hours care to patients of its primary care clinics. Now Franciscan is again partnering with Carena to roll out Virtual Urgent Care to the public. Virtual Urgent Care has the potential to serve thousand of patients in the South Puget Sound area.

"Carena has a long history of making health care more accessible and affordable for patients on their terms. Our 98 percent satisfaction rating demonstrates that patients value the convenience and quality of virtual care," said Ralph C. Derrickson, Carena's President and CEO. "We have enjoyed a multi-year relationship with Franciscan, and we are thrilled to partner with them as they showcase how technology can change the face of health care delivery in

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Written by Australian Business

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the United States

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Patients using Virtual Urgent Care will have access to board-certified doctors and nurse practitioners for after-hours medical diagnosis, treatment planning and prescriptions, if appropriate. Since Virtual Urgent Care is not yet covered by insurance, Franciscan is keeping the price low so that the service is affordable and accessible to the public as part of its mission to create healthier communities.

"Virtual care is a complement, not a substitute, to the in-person services we already provide to patients," continued Robertson. "It's another way for us to be there for patients who need medical care right now."

For more information on Franciscan Virtual Urgent Care, visit [www.franciscancarenow.org](http://www.franciscancarenow.org) .

**Franciscan Health System** includes St. Joseph Medical Center, Tacoma; St. Francis Hospital, Federal Way; St.

Clare Hospital,

Lakewood

; St. Elizabeth Hospital,

Enumclaw

; St. Anthony Hospital,

Gig Harbor

; Highline Medical Center,

Burien

; Harrison Medical Center and Harrison Health

*Partners*

,

Kitsap

and Olympic peninsulas; Franciscan Hospice House,

University Place

; Franciscan Medical Group clinics and providers,

Pierce

,

King

and

Kitsap

counties; and the Franciscan Foundation. Franciscan is part of Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI),

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a national nonprofit health system with headquarters in Englewood, Colo.

Currently, CHI ranks as the nation's third-largest faith-based health system, with annual operating revenues of

\$10.7 billion

and approximately 78,500 employees. In fiscal year 2012, CHI provided more than \$715 million

in charity care and community benefit, including services for the poor, free clinics, education and research. For more information, visit us at

[www.fhshealth.org](http://www.fhshealth.org)

**About Carena, Inc.** Carena, Inc. is a Seattle-based team of medical, consumer service, and technology professionals committed to delivering the best health care experience possible. The technology-enabled care delivery model provides access to healthcare 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via phone, video chat, and the traditional house call. Carena provides health care solutions to patients through self-insured organizations, health systems, and direct to consumer through caresimple.com resulting in lower medical costs and high patient satisfaction. Carena's unique 24/7 services were designed to support the patient primary care provider relationship by providing care and education when the patient's primary care provider is not available. Carena is redefining health care by changing how patients access care and providers deliver it. Since 2010, Carena has provided virtual medical care to about 500,000 workers at major employers in Washington and California. More information about

Carena is available at

[www.CarenaMD.com](http://www.CarenaMD.com)

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