

Prescriptions for Change

Health Information Technology...a continuing journey

A Message from America's Hospitals

Electronic drug allergy alerts.

Bar coding for medication administration.

Computerized decision support systems.

Computerized provider order entry.

Across the country in hospitals big and small, pioneering efforts are underway to adopt health information technology (IT) systems like these. They hold the promise of improved quality and safety for patients, as well as improved efficiencies in the health care system.

Being able to harness technology and better share health information holds the potential to assist caregivers in making treatment decisions, improve care for patients and further engage patients in the care process.

But realizing that promise will take careful planning, coordination with physicians and significant staff education in order to provide the care and safety that patients depend upon. Hospitals will need flexibility as they implement these systems, as well as the ability to meet the specific needs of their patients, communities and caregivers. They also need the time to do it right.

More than 275 Senators and Representatives, Democrats and Republicans, have it right by questioning a new Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rule on electronic health records (EHR). The new CMS rule proposes overly ambitious requirements and ignores upfront costs, time and logistical challenges.

Currently, even the leaders in health IT adoption would have trouble meeting the



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all-or-nothing approach being proposed. A survey conducted earlier this year showed that less than one percent of hospitals would be able to meet the proposed requirements.

America's hospitals are urging the Administration to make changes needed to spur, rather than inhibit, future innovation. We ask that CMS recognize the positive steps hospitals are already taking and incentivize further progress, rather than penaliz-

ing hospitals for taking necessary incremental steps. The rule must be fixed to:

- Provide a reasonable, phased-in approach;
- Provide flexibility in how hospitals achieve EHR adoption;
- Make sure that all facilities within a hospital system are eligible for assistance; and
- Include Critical Access Hospitals in the Medicaid EHR incentive program.

Hospitals work every day to make care safer for patients and are committed to the expansion and adoption of health IT. We believe that by working together to define a realistic approach, we can get there. Certainly the approach must advance widespread adoption throughout hospitals, but it also must include the flexibility to ensure that proper training and planning can occur so patient care is not negatively affected. The journey of health information technology must be one that improves quality and safety for patients.

To learn more about health IT, visit: www.aha.org/Prescriptions.

America's Hospitals – Leading Change for Better Patient Care



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Association