

American Hospital Association

Member Advisory Group on Information Technology

Background

A growing body of evidence links use of IT in health care to improved safety and quality of care. The President and members of Congress have recently prioritized adoption of health IT as a tool for improving the quality of health care. While some hospitals have been pioneers in realizing the benefits of IT for clinical care, the use of clinical IT is not yet widespread. This is in no small measure due to the considerable financial and technical barriers to adoption of IT and exchange of health information. The hospital voice must be strong in national debates on health IT. Within the field, hospitals can help one another through sharing lessons learned. The AHA has formed a member advisory group to guide our efforts on health IT.

Member Advisory Group Objective

The members of the Advisory Group were appointed in the fall of 2004. The group will:

- Provide input on IT advocacy and policy development;
- Guide member education activities that involve IT; and
- Discuss and provide guidance on emerging IT trends in the field.

Meetings

The task force held its first meeting in January 2005 and met again in June. The next meeting will be on November 18, 2005.

Chair

Pam Brier, President and CEO, Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY, is the member advisory group chair. Given the nature of the topic, a mixture of hospital leaders, Chief Information Officers, Chief Medical Officers, and other IT leaders from hospitals were named. A list of members is attached.

Current Activities/Major Issues

The member advisory group played a central role in developing the AHA IT survey, which was fielded in April and May of 2005. The response was considerable, with 939 community hospitals providing data.

The member advisory group also drafted principles that will guide our advocacy and member education efforts on IT. The principles address issues of quality improvement, privacy and security, addressing barriers to IT adoption, and standards for interoperability, among others. The group also discussed a matrix of specific IT policy issues that can be informed by the principles. The principles will serve as an essential set of guideposts as we navigate the recent flurry of legislative and regulatory activities. Topics to be addressed in the near future include:

- Strategic directions for achieving the goal of a health system supported by IT to improve safety and quality
- Member education activities, such as peer-to-peer consultations on issues in IT implementation, such as working with vendors, realizing quality improvements, and managing work process change;
- the emerging trend toward integration of clinical equipment with IT components.