

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

HIT Panel Offers Initial Criteria for Defining 'Meaningful Use'

Today, a HIT Policy Committee work group released its initial recommendations for defining "meaningful use" of electronic health records, [Health Data Management](#) reports. The federal economic stimulus law requires hospitals and physicians to demonstrate meaningful use of EHRs to qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments.

Although the work group's recommendations do not include a formal definition of meaningful use, they offer 22 objectives for EHRs by 2011. The objectives call for qualified EHRs to:

- Allow patients to access clinical information;
- Comply with state and federal privacy, security and data sharing regulations;
- Document patient progress and provide clinical summaries;
- Exchange critical information with other care providers;
- Implement drug interaction safeguards;
- Send patient reminders about follow-up and preventive care;
- Submit immunization and laboratory data to relevant public health registries; and
- Use computerized physician order entry systems to transmit prescriptions.

The work group also released a matrix detailing objectives for 2011, 2013 and 2015. The group plans to refine their recommendations for 2011 and 2013 within three months. In addition, the group released an "achievable vision," which calls for EHR systems to help reduce cardiac arrest, medical errors and preventable hospitalizations by 2015.

Paul Tang -- co-chair of the work group, and vice president and chief medical information officer at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation -- said the meaningful use recommendations currently emphasize health outcomes over software. He said the definition will shift from performance measurement to improved outcomes by 2015. National Coordinator for Health IT David Blumenthal added that today's discussions on meaningful use are the "beginning of a conversation that is going to last for some time."

The policy committee will issue final recommendations on meaningful use to HHS and CMS. Under the federal stimulus law, HHS will publish an interim final rule by the end of 2009, after which CMS will develop a formal definition to support incentive programs.

The [initial recommendations](#) and the [meaningful use matrix](#) are available online (.pdf).

Excerpts from the Work Group Report

We recommend that the ultimate goal of meaningful use of an Electronic Health Record is to enable significant and measurable improvements in population health through a transformed health care delivery system.

The ultimate vision is one in which all patients are fully engaged in their healthcare, providers have real-time access to all medical information and tools to help ensure the quality and safety of the care provided while also affording improved access and elimination of health care disparities. This "north star" must guide our key policy objectives, the advanced care processes needed to achieve them, and lastly, the specific use of information technology that will enable the desired outcomes, and our ability to monitor them. For example, demonstrating improved performance and reduced disparities in blood pressure.

The recommended definition of "meaningful use" will depend on the healthcare setting in which it is employed. Thus, some features and capabilities will be recommended as required in an ambulatory setting before similar functions are expected to be widely used in the hospital. This reflects both the availability of the technology in these different settings as well as the potential impact of these features on the health of the population served.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, HHS

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

AUTHORITY: Section 3002, Pub. L. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115.

SUMMARY: This notice invites comments, within ten (10) days of the June 16, 2009 HIT Policy Committee meeting, on the Committee's discussions of and draft recommendations for the term "meaningful use" which are available at <http://healthit.hhs.gov>. Comments will be received by the Committee for consideration and further recommendations to the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology on the elements and measures of Meaningful Use of a certified EHR. The HIT Policy Committee is a Federal Advisory Committee to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which will be meeting on June 16, 2009, to explore further the term "meaningful use" of electronic health records.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ("Recovery Act -P.L. 111-5) provides for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments for eligible providers, such as physicians and hospitals, in order to promote the adoption of EHRs. To receive the incentive payments, providers must demonstrate "meaningful use" of a certified EHR. Building on the work of the HIT Policy Committee, HHS anticipates developing a proposed rule that provides greater detail on the incentive programs and "meaningful use." HHS expects to issue the proposed rule in late 2009 followed by a comment period.

DATES: All comments on the draft description of Meaningful Use should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. EDT on **June 26, 2009**.

SUBMISSION: Electronic responses to the request for comments on the draft description of Meaningful Use are preferred and should be addressed to: MeaningfulUse@hhs.gov, subject line "Meaningful Use." Written comments may also be submitted to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, 200 Independence Ave, SW, Suite 729D, Washington, DC 20201. Attention: HIT Policy Committee Meaningful Use Comments.

INFORMATION: We request that comments be **limited to maximum of 2000 words**. For additional information, including any requests for a hard copy of the draft description of Meaningful Use, call or email Judith Sparrow, 202-205-4528, judy.sparrow@hhs.gov