

Uncle Sam Gives Electronic Medical Records a Thumbs Up

Hear that buzzing sound? It's the growing noise health information technology is making in Indiana. And it's becoming louder.

Several Indiana companies and organizations focusing on health information exchange and electronic medical records are stepping up their game as the industry prepares for an explosion. The federal stimulus legislation, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, includes about \$2 billion for health information technology (IT) initiatives.

"To say that we are unusually strong in health information exchange compared to other states in an understatement," asserts John Kansky, vice president of business development for the Indiana Health Information Exchange (IHIE).

IHIE, BioCrossroads, the Indiana Health Informatics Corporation board and other key stakeholders have been meeting to discuss what Indiana has to offer in this area, what it needs and how to best position the state to receive a share of the stimulus funds, Kansky explains.



The federal stimulus package could be a shot in the arm for Indiana health information technology companies.

Since *BizVoice*® first addressed Indiana's role in electronic medical records and exchanges in 2005, more companies have formed and efforts have grown. Now, IHIE connects 10,000 physicians and more than six million patients at most hospitals in the Indianapolis nine-county region as well as facilities in Evansville, Kokomo, Lafayette and Gary. The exchange recently signed contracts with hospitals in Terre Haute and Vincennes, notes IHIE Chief Operating Officer Tom Penno.

"IHIE continues to expand across different parts of the state; we are particularly excited about the stimulus piece because we think that will help us accelerate that expansion," Penno adds.

The stimulus bill gives doctors five years to start using electronic medical records (EMRs). Doctors who beat the deadline can earn extra money in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. Those who don't have EMRs in place by 2014 will see decreases in their reimbursements, Kansky states.

Indiana could receive funding to share its expertise and jumpstart this process. Funding could be for anything from

education initiatives to train health IT personnel to money for connecting various health information exchanges, he shares. The non-profit IHIE is one of several exchanges already operating in Indiana.

While the federal money must be allocated within the next 18 months, no specific application deadlines have been set (as of *BizVoice*® press time), Kansky notes.



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Watching closely

One company that could benefit from the national growth in health IT is Fort Wayne-based Medical Informatics Engineering (MIE). The company develops electronic medical record products for physician offices. In March, MIE announced Google selected one of its products for its onsite employee health clinics.

NoMoreClipboard.com, another growing Fort Wayne company (with ties to MIE), allows consumers to develop an online personal health record.

"Rather than going to the doctor's office and filling out a clipboard full of paper registration forms in the waiting room, they can go online and create a personal health record and then share it with their physicians electronically," explains Jeff Donnell, vice president of marketing. NoMoreClipboard.com then can deliver this information to physicians regardless of what type of technology they use.

Indiana University partnered with NoMoreClipboard.com to provide a free version of the system for all students at the Bloomington campus. Students can create a personal health record account online and then send it to the IU Health Center prior to any visits.

The company also has relationships with Google Health and Microsoft HealthVault. Google Health provides a link directly to NoMoreClipboard.com as one way users can deliver their Google Health records to doctors' offices. The company also can exchange information between its system and a Microsoft HealthVault account.

"One of the challenges here is we're encouraging patients to create an electronic version of the health record, but 80% of physicians in the United States are still using paper charts," Donnell surmises. He says doctors are slow to adopt electronic records due to cost constraints; that could change with the stimulus bill.

To view the May/June 2005 *BizVoice*® story on electronic medical records, go to the archives section of www.bizvoicemagazine.com.

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Jeff Donnell, NoMoreClipboard.com, at www.nomoreclipboard.com

Indiana Health Information Exchange at www.ihie.com

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