

ONC Announces Interoperability Roadmap

Following up on National Health IT Week's focus on interoperability, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) announced last week a nationwide interoperability roadmap to ensure that information can be shared securely among health IT infrastructures.

In the past month, the ONC has conducted research and collected feedback from industry stakeholders for use in a draft of the roadmap. The ONC will release a first draft in mid-October at a joint meeting of the Health Information Technology Policy and Standards committees, with plans to open public comment on a second draft by January 2015, with the final version set for completion by March 2015.

According to Federal Times, Erica Galvez, the ONC Interoperability Manager, envisions a virtual cycle of critical information moving from care-delivery systems to the research community, where important questions can be asked and answers fed back into the care-delivery system, so that timely information can support decision-making.

Apart from the ONC, other health care systems are taking action to implement changes which promote interoperable systems.

After signing on to the country's largest information network, Surescripts, 13 major health care systems are now able to send and receive authentic, encrypted health information directly between trusted recipients at other health care organizations. More than 100 additional health systems joined Surescripts earlier this year and nearly 1,000 hospitals are now able to use the network's clinical messaging capabilities.

Tom Skelton, chief executive officer of Surescripts, noted the

inherent value in providing a platform for interoperable systems, stating, "There is no question that healthcare is going digital – the progress we've made is proof that providers across the country are sharing critical information to coordinate patient care."

CNSI has also been at the forefront of the interoperable movement, working with state governments and in other public-private initiatives to integrate health information exchanges. Utilizing its eCAMS Connected Healthcare Services, CNSI completed conformance and interoperability testing for the Southeastern Michigan Health Information Exchange (SEMHIE), a diverse non-profit multi-stakeholder consortium whose membership includes six major health systems.

In 2011, the SEMHIE successfully launched on the Nationwide Health Information Network, a set of standards, services and policies that enable the secure exchange of health information over the Internet.

As the ONC continues to develop the interoperability roadmap and more health care systems take the necessary steps to facilitate interoperable systems, more providers and their patients will be able to access health information from anywhere and in real time. These advances will empower consumers to take initiative when it comes to their health and health care.

What other ways can we support interoperability? Tweet @CNSICorp to let us know!

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