



Rx: Health Care FYI #2

From: *Rep. Tim Murphy (PA-18)*

Subject: *Electronic Medical Records*

The president has included \$125 million in the FY 2006 budget to help meet his goal of assuring that most Americans have electronic health records/electronic medical records within the next 10 years.

Background:

1. Patient records frequently are scattered between multiple hospitals and doctors offices resulting in the likelihood that important medical records could be lost or not retrieved.
2. Diagnostic tests may be complicated by data that was not available to a physician.
3. It is time consuming to obtain paper medical records, especially in cases of emergency care.
4. Patients often provide incomplete medical histories, which often omit or distort important data.
5. Tens of thousands of lives and hundreds and billions of dollars are lost every year on medical errors.

What is an Electronic Medical Record (EMR)?

1. An EMR centralizes all records on a patient and instantly communicates this information to any health care provider in a secure and confidential manner.
2. All patient information including medical history, diagnostic tests (e.g. x-rays, CT scans, video copies of surgery, ultra-sounds and laboratory treatments) can be shared instantaneously with physicians, consultants and health care specialists.
3. EMRs are capable of instantly checking that proper diagnostic questions are asked and that providers and patients follow up on treatments (including prescriptions and follow-up appointments).

What are the Advantages?

1. Eliminates the need for duplicate tests.
2. Reduces the search time for medical histories and limits instances of lost files, patient recall or unaccessible files.
3. Instantly searches for symptoms, findings, treatments, diagnosis and health care providers involved with patient care.
4. Reduces the need for additional staff and the expansive storage space needed to maintain paper files.
5. When medical errors occur, EMRs allow providers to retrace the exact steps through the process to see where the error occurred.
6. Prompts providers to pursue certain avenues of treatment based on diagnosis.
7. EMRs automatically generate bills and reimbursements which reduces billing errors.

How Electronic Medical Records Work:

1. From the time that your doctor makes the referral, all aspects of patient care are tracked.
2. Patient information is centralized for providers to provide proper diagnosis and treatments.
3. The doctor can be prompted to check for specific medical tests based on complaints and medical findings.
4. EMRs track patient treatments (including if prescriptions were filled and that patients remembered to attend any follow up appointments).
5. The EMR can be programmed to automatically generate a report to the referring physician or a patient summary in the hospital chart.

An Example of Success:

1. By applying EMR technology solutions, The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center has decreased the need to repeat laboratory, radiology or other invasive and expensive tests because the tests, treatments, files and x-rays are easily shared by authorized users.

According to the White House, the Federal Government's role regarding Electronic Medical Records is to:

- Foster regional collaborations and demonstration projects that will test the effectiveness of Health IT and encourage widespread adoption;
- Coordinate its health information systems so that care delivered by the Federal government including reimbursement and oversight is more efficient and cost-effective; and
- Adopt Uniform Health Information Standards to allow medical information to be stored and easily shared electronically while maintaining privacy.

The successful implementation of an Electronic Health Record could save over \$78 billion a year or up to 5% of the nation's total annual health care costs. (Center for Information Technology Leadership)

These are savings that can not and must not be ignored.

For further information or to join the 21st Century Health Care Caucus, contact Congressman Murphy's Health Care Legislative Assistant Michael Baxter at 225-2301 or Michael.Baxter@mail.house.gov.