

ISSUE BRIEF

Facilitate Adoption of Health Information Technology

The American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) strongly supports a high quality, safe, and efficient health care system. Health information technology (HIT) plays an integral role in the operation of such a system. A strong federal commitment is essential to ensure the adoption of interoperable health information technology, electronic health records (EHRs), and e-prescribing.

AHCA/NCAL applauds the provisions in the *Health Information Technology for Economic & Clinical Health (HITECH) Act* included in the *American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, now Public Law 111-5)*, which promote HIT adoption. Unfortunately, the *HITECH Act* leaves out long term and post-acute care providers. AHCA/NCAL urges Congress to remedy this oversight by providing comparable support for HIT adoption by long term and post-acute care as was afforded to providers in acute and ambulatory care settings. In the meantime, the Secretary of Health & Human Services (HHS) should use discretionary funding, perhaps from the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMI), to promote HIT in long term and post-acute care settings.

A study in the April 2009 *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* found nearly all skilled nursing facilities maintain at least basic electronic information systems for transmitting Minimum Data Set (MDS) information to HHS and other entities. Extending federal HIT funding to long term and post-acute care would allow these providers to build on such basic capabilities and focus more on patient care needs and other meaningful use of HIT that would benefit patients, who often transition among various health care settings.

Since it is only when all health care providers adopt HIT that we will begin to realize the care benefits of EHRs, the reduction of medical errors and the savings that can be derived from making patients' care transitions as seamless as possible, AHCA/NCAL calls on Congress to extend HIT funding to long term and post-acute care.

The HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) has estimated that HIT adoption by the health care system will save an estimated \$140 billion per year – close to 10 percent of total U.S. health spending. Likewise, a Rand Corporation study found the U.S. health care system could save \$162 billion annually with widespread use of HIT. Beyond achieving efficiencies and costs savings, AHCA/NCAL supports HIT adoption by long term, post-acute, and other health care settings as it will help to improve patient safety and care quality, particularly as patients move among care settings.

Without access to capital investments that can offset the costs associated with HIT adoption, it is unlikely that long term and post-acute care providers will deploy these tools in the near term. It follows that without HIT adoption among all providers, the federal government cannot expect to realize a robust return on its investment in HIT, including reduced administrative costs for claims processing and reimbursement; improved health care quality, efficiency, and care coordination; or enhanced patient safety and advancements in managing chronic conditions. AHCA/NCAL urges Congress to extend HIT funding to long term and post-acute care not only to achieve cost savings, but to make patients' care transitions as seamless as possible.



American Health Care Association



National Center for Assisted Living

Ask Congress...

- To provide HIT funding to long term & post-acute settings comparable to the support acute & ambulatory care settings receive, plus direct the HHS Secretary to use discretionary funding to promote HIT adoption by long term & post-acute care providers.

Key Facts

- The National Coordinator for Health Information Technology estimates HIT adoption could save close to 10% of total U.S. health spending.
- A Rand Corporation study estimates HIT adoption could save \$162 billion annually.
- To ensure the greatest return on the federal government's investment in HIT, there must be widespread adoption of HIT among all providers.

Contact

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