

State of the Industry (HIMSS Convention News)

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Feb 25, 2010 - 7:25:21 PM



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - In February 2009, the U.S. government enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to serve as a stimulus to the American economy. With the intention of improving the quality of patient care and ultimately reducing overall healthcare costs, the act included an investment of \$147.7 billion dollars in Medicaid, health insurance subsidies, health information technology, health research institutes, prevention and wellness, effectiveness research on healthcare treatments, and more.

ARRA focuses on digitization (through electronic health records); payment reform based on quality improvement efforts - including EHR meaningful use incentives; and, funding for comparative effectiveness research. ARRA allocated a large amount of the funds to the expanded use of healthcare technology, specifically electronic health records (EHR), as a way to reduce clinical and administrative errors, link the inpatient and outpatient realm, and measure and improve the quality of care through integration with other quality improvement programs. Much of these funds will be distributed as incentive payments for practices and hospitals for implementing and using electronic health records, with eventual penalties for those who do not.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), which was established in ARRA, are actively working to define meaningful use and to set standards for the EHR incentive program, for which hospitals and other providers can receive an incentive payment by adopting, implementing, or upgrading a meaningful use-certified EHR. The first payments to hospitals could be as early as October 2010 and January 2011 for other providers. The objectives and measures of the EHR incentive program "include use of certified EHR technology in a manner that improves quality, safety, and efficiency of health care delivery, reduces health care disparities, engages patients and families, improves care coordination, improves population and public health, and ensures adequate privacy and security protections for personal health information."
(<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/12/20091230a.html>)

Interoperability Standards

In the years leading up to ARRA and the drive towards an integrated healthcare system, several organizations, including Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE), Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP), Health Level 7 (HL7), and Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), have been developing interoperability standards that are bringing the dream closer to a reality. Some of the developing standards include Retrieve Form for Data Capture (RFD), Clinical Research Data Capture Profile (CRD), Drug Safety Content Profile (DSC), Retrieve Form for Data Capture Transaction Package (TP 50), Care Report Pre-Populate Component (C76), Clinical Research Document Component (C151), Clinical Research Interoperability Specification (IS 158), and Retrieve and Populate Form Capability (CAP 135). These standards provide methods for gathering data within a user's current application to meet the requirements of an external system and enable the capture of supplemental data variables not typically maintained in an EHR or laboratory information system through a more seamless integration with a local information system.

Outcome and HIMSS 2010

Among the early adopters of these standards is Outcome Sciences, Inc. (d/b/a Outcome), a company that designs and implements patient registries, post-approval studies, quality improvement programs, and integrated technologies for evaluating real-world outcomes. Outcome's studies focus on safety, benefit-risk management, outcomes, health economics, clinical and cost effectiveness, and quality of healthcare products and services, including drugs or devices, procedures, diseases, and conditions.

Outcome first demonstrated its ability to implement RFD at the 2007 Connectathon and the HIMSS Interoperability Showcase. Since then, Outcome has been an integral part of the 2008, 2009, and 2010 Connectathons and Interoperability Showcases and has also participated in other interoperability demonstrations including the CDISC Interchange and at the Drug Information Association's (DIA) annual conference. Outcome has also taken on a teaching role of this new standard by presenting in the first-ever RFD training at the CDISC Interchanges in Japan and North America in 2009.

Outcome offers a partnership program, Outcome™ Connect, that is designed specifically to help EHR systems meet emerging quality reporting and integration requirements and needs of their customers, including:

- meeting quality reporting requirements for Meaningful Use
- participating directly in patient registries and pay-for-performance programs, including PQRI
- integrating with certification, accreditation, and quality improvement programs
- fulfilling submissions for immunization registries, reportable lab results for public health, and syndromic surveillance

This partnership allows for data being collected within the EHR to be used for secondary uses without the need to re-enter data into multiple systems. The Outcome™ Connect program uses healthcare industry standards. Outcome has adopted IHE Profiles and HITSP constructs that play a key role in interoperability between EHR systems and Outcome's eClinical solutions.

Outcome has demonstrated success in several models of this integration. One of these models is quality reporting. Through this partnership, EHRs are able to connect their system with Outcome's Quality Reporting programs that meet hospital and practice needs for reporting to a range of organizations including The Joint Commission; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, national medical specialty reporting and credentialing programs; State reporting entities, immunization and other registries. This connection enables an EHR's hospitals and practices to easily participate in nationally recognized performance, accreditation, licensure and reimbursement programs.

Outcome also provides the opportunity for EHRs to connect their system with Outcome's research programs, simplifying participation in research and providing these practices additional revenue. Through the partnership, EHR data captured during the patient encounter can be used for additional research purposes.

Also through this partnership, EHRs can connect their product with the ability to easily report public health conditions and adverse event / safety reports to appropriate state and federal regulatory agencies such as state departments of public health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

At the HIMSS 2010 Interoperability Showcase, Outcome will be demonstrating all three models and will be demonstrating scenarios in Drug Safety, Cancer Registry Reporting, Quality, and Research.

The Interoperability Showcase is located at Booth 233. Outcome is also exhibiting at Booth 2343.