

States Have Breakthrough in Effort to Share Electronic Health Records on a National Scale

Eight states, representing over a third of the U.S. population, recently took a huge step in their ability to share electronic health records (EHRs) across state lines.

Until now, the effort to expand usage of electronic health records has been limited by the incompatibility of many different systems. A variety of custom interfaces used between records and health information exchanges (or HIEs – the local networks that link healthcare providers) has made it difficult to share information across systems.

But this past November, a workgroup of 7 states and 11 vendors (which has since grown to 8 states and 22 vendors) determined common specifications, those best practices to allow easy sharing of electronic records across state lines by releasing a set of technical specifications to link all their regional medical networks and healthcare providers.

State representatives and industry vendors partnered together to create an EHR/HIE Interoperability Workgroup to develop a set of uniform standards which would allow health information exchanges to connect to each other and to other data-sharing partners more easily, while keeping patient data safe.

The workgroup was formed by the New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC). The common guidelines were created by organizations the federal government designated to promote EHR adoption in California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Vermont. Together, those states represent over 30% of the country's population. They were joined by thirteen leading EHR vendors: Allscripts, Cerner, eClinicalWorks, eMDs, ePocrates, Dr. First, First Medical Solutions, GE, Greenway, McKesson, NextGen, Sage, and Siemens – and nine HIE vendors: Axolotl, dbMotion, GE, ICA, InterSystems, MedAllies, Medicity, Mirth, and Misys Open Source Solutions.

Doug Fridsma, MD and PhD, Director of the Office of Standards & Interoperability at the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology, commented, "I am encouraged by and excited about this type of collaboration, which has the potential to advance real-world pilots, implementation and feedback on standards for health information exchange. The results of this kind of initiative can help us advance health IT nationwide."

"This is a crucial step," said David Whitlinger, Executive Director of NYeC. "We started this as a New York State initiative, but we soon realized that many other states were facing the same interoperability challenges and many of the EHR and HIE vendors were also looking for clarity from the marketplace to define their product roadmaps."

Collectively, the group is now looking forward to widespread adoption and market preference for the products that employ the specifications. "I expect that the flexibility and agility of the EHR/HIE Interoperability Workgroup will serve as an ideal laboratory for standards that are rapidly evolving," stated John Halamka, MD, Co-Chair of the HIT Standards Committee, Chief Information Officer of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Chief Information Officer at Harvard Medical School, Chairman of the New England Healthcare Exchange Network.

The technical specifications establish uniform standards that will allow healthcare providers to:

- Send and receive individual patient records with other healthcare providers inter/intrastate
- Search for and retrieve patient records across disparate healthcare systems

The initiative next hopes to launch a pilot program. More information, including quotes from all workgroup members, is available at: www.interopwg.org.

IHE USA North American Connectathon 2012



Earlier this month, nearly 600 engineers came together in a hotel basement in Chicago, IL, in order to sit before computers and work to demonstrate the specifications meant to standardize innovation in health IT. The event, called the IHE USA North American Connectathon 2012 takes place annually at the Hyatt Regency, and allows attendees to demonstrate their products using real-world clinical scenarios.

This year's event, made up of EHR vendors and device manufacturers from the US and abroad, drew 117 participating organizations, 169 individual systems, and 597 engineers. Among these vendors, were seventeen EHR/HIE vendors working to demonstrate the IHE profiles underlying the new specifications created by the NYeC EHR/HIE Interoperability Workgroup [see above].

SHIN-NY 2.0: Strategy Explained

Video Available Now, at the NYeC Website:

www.nyehealth.org/index.php/programs/about-shin-ny



During the NYeC 2011 Digital Health Conference last month, David Whitlinger, NYeC Executive Director, addressed a packed room of healthcare and IT professionals to explain the new developments in the SHIN-NY. In the discussion (which can be viewed at the NYeC website) Whitlinger outlines how far we have come with health information exchange in New York, and the strategy behind where we are going. The SHIN-NY 2.0, he explains, will be a network of networks, establishing statewide capabilities.

Through standardization and innovation, the SHIN-NY will move away from a community-based network to one that includes the entire State of New York.

For more information please visit us at:
www.nyehealth.org

10,000 New York Doctors to Adopt Electronic Health Records

NYeC Enrolls 5,212 Healthcare Providers; NYC Health Department Enrolls 4,900

Both the NYeC and the NYC Health Department met their end-of-year goals, enrolling over 10,000 New York State healthcare providers into a federally subsidized program that will help them transition from paper to electronic health records (EHRs). Federal and state data has long shown that health information technologies measurably both improve healthcare and reduce its cost.

The Regional Extension Centers (RECs) instruct doctors and nurses how to implement EHRs, teaching them how to achieve the federally defined "Meaningful Use," which qualifies them for reimbursements. The program supports mainly primary care providers and small practices, who often struggle with the transition.

Both the NYC Health Department and NYeC created individualized programs while working closely together on shared goals. By the end of 2011, the REC programs combined had enrolled well over 10,000 providers, with each meeting its yearly goal. New York has two entities that administer REC programs throughout the state. The New York City Health Department through its NYC REACH program, covers the five boroughs. The New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC) oversees the rest of the state, including Long Island.

"10,000 is a big number and we're proud to have worked closely with our partners at REACH to achieve it. Of course, enrollment is just the first step, and now we are focused on helping all of these providers reach the Meaningful Use of these technologies. That's what will really help providers and their patients," said Paul Wilder, Director of the NYeC REC.

"In New York City, we've seen how health IT can help doctors," said Jesse Singer, DO, Assistant Commissioner at the NYC Health Department. "EMRs let them see which patients are falling through gaps in our health system and help practices set priorities to improve population health. We are excited to help more doctors understand how to use data to improve the lives of their patients."

The results are already being felt by healthcare providers throughout the state.

"As a physician in a small practice I can say I greatly appreciate what the NYeC REC has done for us," noted Eugene Heslin, MD, owner of Bridge Street Family Medicine in Saugerties, NY. Dr. Heslin is also on the NYeC board of directors. "I'm excited to say that all five physicians in our practice have just attested to Meaningful Use."

Louise West, Practice Administrator at Myrtle Street Obstetrics & Gynecology, PC in Saratoga Springs, NY, has been involved with the NYeC REC since 2010. "Although we had successfully integrated EMR in 2006," she said, "as a busy OB-GYN practice, we realized that any resource we could tap to expedite achieving Meaningful Use would be a wonderful time management tool and stress reducer. In March of 2011, our practice was among the first in New York State to achieve Meaningful Use."

Essen Medical Associates in the South Bronx have worked with the NYC Health Department during every step of EHR adoption. "I am proud to be working closely with the extension center," said Sumir Sahgal, MD. The practice now delivers state-of-the-art care to patients in one of the most underserved areas in the state. "With more and more organizations adopting EMRs, I am looking forward to even more connectivity and having a full picture of my patients' health at my fingertips."

Events

February 8, 2012, 2 pm: NYS Regional Extension Vendor Call 2012

The New York eHealth Collaborative has had the pleasure of working with a phenomenal group of electronic health record vendor partners over the past year. We are looking to further our collaboration efforts and embrace larger numbers of vendors who support NYS providers. The NYeC team will present our strategy for successful EHR vendor partnerships in 2012. The Regional Extension Vendor Call, at 2pm, February 8th, will provide you with the current status of NYeC's Regional Extension Center, discuss how we plan to work with practices in 2012, and address initiatives across the state to support adoption beyond REC providers. It will offer an update of statewide HIE, and what that means for practices, RHIOs and the health IT, along with providing you specifics on the vendor selection events to support the REC practices, paper based providers, and those looking to replace their existing technologies. All EHR vendors in the state are welcome to Register now!

<https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/showReg?udc=i3af11vhrcqh>

October 15 & 16, 2012: NYeC Announces Dates for its 2012 Digital Health Conference

This exciting two-day event held at Pier Sixty's stunning waterfront venue in New York City, will bring together over 600 attendees from the health IT community, including physicians, hospital staff, healthcare leadership, academics, IT startups, and innovators from various industries. This forum for intellectual exchange will include a diversity of speakers from across and beyond the health IT field, discussing progress, sharing best practices, and displaying emerging health IT tools. The conference will showcase the technologies, celebrate achievements, inspire collaboration, and promote advancement of healthcare innovation. Photos of the NYeC 2011 Digital Health Conference are available here:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nyehealth/sets/72157628322241549/show/>

A call for speakers will be issued later this month.

October 15th, 2012: NYeC 2012 Gala & Awards Ceremony

The NYeC 2012 Gala & Awards Ceremony will be held on October 15th at Pier Sixty, on the Chelsea waterfront. After the tremendous event this past year, we look forward to doing it again, and we hope that you can join us. Hosted by the NYeC Board of Directors, the gala will recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of those who have made great strides in advancing healthcare in New York State and beyond. The festivities will include culinary excellence by Abigail Kirsch, live music, and a cocktail reception.

are interested in sponsorship opportunities for the NYeC 2012 DHC or the Gala & Awards Ceremony, please contact: Tom Tagariello, NYeC Events Manager, at: ttagariello@NYeHealth.org, or 646-619-6761

We Want To Hear From YOU!

If you have a story about how electronic health records have affected your life, as a physician, patient, family member, or healthcare provider of any kind, we would love to hear it. We may be interested in featuring your story in an upcoming newsletter, or on our website. Please feel free to drop us a line at hitmeans@nyehealth.org.

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