HITSP
Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel

2009 webinar series . . . HITSP and U.S. healthcare IT interoperability

Steve's Story* . . . part two

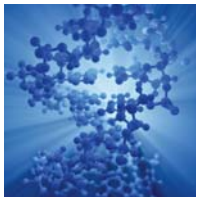
"Steve" is a 27-year-old male coping with the long-term effects of a brain tumor that was removed during his childhood. He continues to face issues regarding the availability and usability of his medical information during follow-up and emergency care.

I have seen so many doctors over the years, I have lost count. Between moving to a different city, to changing insurance providers when I got my first job, to having my doctors retire or change practices, it seems like I see new providers every year.

Every time I visit a new doctor or a different healthcare facility, I usually have to recreate my medical history and my family's medical history because very few of the providers are connected or set up to share information. It's an annoyance to fill out piles of forms listing my allergies, medical history, and insurance information. These details aren't easy to remember, especially when I'm not feeling well.

But above being a hassle to have to fill out forms and have tests re-taken, I'm worried that my providers aren't able to give me the best possible care. Without all of my personal and family medical history in front of them, I fear that they'll miss seeing a trend in my progress that could have a huge impact on my health.

Between my grandfather's struggle with diabetes and my grandmother's death a few years ago from her thyroid condition, there are some important things in my family history that I want my doctors to always keep in mind.



Some of my doctors have even mentioned that they can take a look at my genes to find out if I may be predisposed to any other conditions or diseases like cancer. This technology can even help them determine which medications would be most effective for me.

I definitely support a system where my genetic information is available. With all of the complications I've had in the past, I want my doctors to be able to identify and treat future problems before they become too large. But at the same time, I want to be sure that my personal data is shared in a safe, secure way.

*based on a true story

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Steve's story is not happy, and it is not uncommon. Poor communications between and among doctors, labs, pharmacies, insurance companies and other providers cause many patients to suffer from fragmented care that is detrimental to their health.

Healthcare in an Interoperable World

In an interoperable world, Steve's health record could be seamlessly and securely transferred from one healthcare facility to another, between and among diverse systems. Providers and care setting where Steve has gone for testing or treatment previously will also have the ability to contribute valuable information on Steve's past medical history.

With Steve's consent, his care providers would be able to gain instant access to data from the providers and care settings that he currently goes to, or that he has gone to in the past. This includes information on testing and treatment, active and past medication lists, personal and family health history, genetic and genomic test information, allergies, current and previous problems, diagnoses, visit summaries, lab results and other test results (including images), registration, and insurance information.

Through the seamlesss and secure exchange of information, Steve would have access to his own personal health record, where he could update his personal and family health history and grant access to his various providers. He would also have easy access to results, conditions, allergies, and diagnosis codes — all presented in layperson terms.

In an interoperable world, Steve wouldn't have to worry about filling out forms, taking the same test multiple times, or providing his doctors with information, giving him more time and energy to focus on what's really important: his health.

HITSP: Enabling Healthcare Interoperability

The Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP) is a national, volunteer-driven, consensus-based organization that is working to ensure the interoperability of electronic health records in the United States.

A cooperative partnership between the public and private sectors, HITSP identifies and selects the necessary functional components and standards to enable the interoperable exchange of health care data. HITSP also documents any gaps in standards which must be resolved. The Panel then develops guidance documents known as Interoperability Specifications (IS) that recommend the standards that will meet clinical and business needs for sharing information across organizations and systems. Once an IS is recognized by the HHS Secretary, agencies administering or sponsoring federal health programs are required to implement the standards.

Operating under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HITSP is sponsored by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in cooperation with strategic partners the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), the Advanced Technology Institute (ATI), and Booz Allen Hamilton.

Nearly 400 organizations representing consumers, health care providers, public health agencies, government agencies, standards developing organizations, and other stakeholders now participate in the HITSP and its committees.

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More Information

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