



HITSP

Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel

a webinar series on U.S. healthcare interoperability

Steve's Story* . . . part two



"Steve" is a 26-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.



Last month I went to Boston to see a neurologist that specializes in cases like mine.

The healthcare system in that city is really impressive. Everything is computer-based and much more advanced than the paperwork, charts and films that I'm used to. The doctors and nurses that I met were all using a program called 'Massachusetts Share' that lets them exchange medical information about their patients.



One of the other patients, a local guy, told me that all his doctors accessed and updated his medical records electronically. He was saying that everything from lab results to prescriptions were available online, but there was some kind of security system so that only certain doctors could see certain results.



My parents had travelled with me to Boston and they were as excited as I was about this new healthcare system. After a lifetime of filling out the same forms and taking the same tests, they knew that this would save us lots of time, money and wasted effort. My mom was especially impressed that there were no paper records to carry around or worry about losing.



As I was leaving, the nurse at the doctor's office gave me a CD containing all of the new test results and CT scans to take back to my home doctor. She also said the information would be available online if my doctor was part of a 'Regional Health Information Organization' – she called it a RHIO.

When I got back home to Las Vegas, I took the CD to my doctor but he wouldn't open it because his office has a strict policy to protect them from computer viruses. There is no RHIO here, so online access was also out. I offered to take the CD home and e-mail him the test results, but his office doesn't have secure e-mail and he didn't know if he had the correct software to open the files. We finally agreed that I would print the test results and bring them back to his office.



I had high hopes this time, but the frustration continues. For now, anyway, the only RIO in this town is the one with a casino in the lobby.



**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 ideal world, Steve's personal health records will be *interoperable* — this means his healthcare information can be exchanged seamlessly and securely between and among diverse systems across the United States.

With Steve's consent, his care providers will be able to gain instant access to data from the providers and care settings where he has previously gone for testing or treatment, including:

- active and past medication lists
- allergies
- current and previous problems and diagnoses
- discharge and visit summaries
- lab results and other test results, including images
- registration and insurance information

As a patient, Steve will be able to review and annotate his personal health record with his own findings while also monitoring and collecting clinical information from his care providers. It will become easier for him to determine which hospitals are safest and provide better outcomes.

Whether he travels across town, across the country or — ultimately — around the world to visit specialists, Steve's care providers will have the most up-to-date records available because his healthcare data is being retrieved electronically from its source. Even in an emergency situation — whether it is a personal emergency or a national disaster — this data will be readily available to help clinicians make critical and timely decisions. It will even become easier to identify, track and contain the spread of serious infections and contagious diseases.

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 HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt, 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.



More Information

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