



HITSP

Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel

a webinar series on U.S. healthcare interoperability



Steve's Story* . . . part nine

"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.



I've been on medications my whole life, but since the frequency and intensity of my headaches has increased, I've been taking more pills than ever. The doctors haven't found anything that works perfectly for me yet, so they keep trying new drugs and drug combinations.



It's hard enough to remember the medicines that I'm taking now, but keeping track of everything that I've taken in the past is extremely difficult. I know the doctors need an accurate and complete list of my active medications, so I've been trying to keep updated records myself. I also try to fill all of my prescriptions at the same pharmacy. At least that way the pharmacist has records of my past treatments.



Because we're trying so many different drug combinations, my doctors are being very careful and taking the time to explain the details of new medications before I start them. But sometimes my headaches make it difficult for me to concentrate and I have trouble understanding or remembering their directions.



Last week, for example, my doctor prescribed a new pill for me, but I forgot to ask if I should stop taking the drug that I was currently on. I can always call them back with questions, but that takes up a lot of time.



I'm also finding that I'm developing more acute allergies. Like many people, I suffer the most in the spring, when everything is blooming. I often wonder if all the medications I'm taking are making me more susceptible to allergies, because this year I could hardly step outside without sneezing. Over-the-counter allergy pills help a lot, and I may take them almost every day when my congestion is very bad.

I've told my doctors about these OTC medications, but they don't show up in my medical records the same way a prescription would be recorded. This worries me because I know that even over-the-counter pills can cause dangerous reactions when combined with prescription medications.

If a young guy like me has this much of a challenge, I can imagine that someone older — like my parents or their parents — could really benefit from a better system for keeping track of medications.



**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 would find that accessing complete lists of his medications, allergies, and other information would be much easier, because his providers, pharmacists, and health insurance providers could all see and share that information. No matter where information was collected, it could be added to Steve's electronic record and accessed by the appropriate medical personnel.

Since Steve's records would be shared among clinicians and pharmacists in multiple sites and settings of care, he wouldn't need to worry about remembering each of the medications that he's taken, or about forgetting to mention one when filling out forms.

Traveling and leaving town would no longer be a concern for Steve, either. If he found himself at a hospital in another town, the doctors there could still access lists of the prescriptions that he takes through medication reconciliation.

Even in an ambulatory setting, Steve's current medical information would be supported by electronic prescribing.

Steve's over-the-counter medications could be documented in his health records as well, ensuring that doctors are aware of all of the drugs that he is taking – prescription and non-prescription.

Americans would receive more comprehensive care in an interoperable world because information would be exchanged seamlessly and securely between and among diverse systems, including those in multiple doctors' offices, pharmacies, health insurance companies, and hospitals.

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 healthcare 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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