

National Health IT Week Shines a Spotlight on Importance of Widespread Health IT Adoption

By Julia Zarb

Health IT stakeholders will converge in the nation's Capital May 14-18, 2007, for the second annual National Health IT Week. There, they will join together to send a powerful message on the importance of fostering widespread IT adoption to improve the quality and affordability of healthcare in the U.S.

First initiated by the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) in 2006, National Health IT Week is a collaborative forum where organizations with diverse perspectives work together toward the common goal of accelerating change to improve healthcare efficiency, quality, cost-effectiveness and patient safety.

With approximately 50 associations, payers, provider groups, consumer organizations, vendors, and research foundations committed to participate, National Health IT Week will consist of individually planned and hosted conferences and meetings designed to elevate national attention on the necessity of health IT adoption.

“By providing the opportunity for health IT stakeholders to work together toward a common goal and bring our message directly to federal and congressional policymakers, National Health IT Week serves as an important vehicle for furthering the discussions and actions necessary to achieve national healthcare transformation through widespread IT adoption,” said Dave Roberts, HIMSS, Vice President of Government Relations.

“A number of significant milestones have been achieved since the inaugural National Health IT Week in 2006, and the goal for the 2007 gathering is to continue building on those developments,” added Roberts.

Among the most significant developments since the first National Health IT Week in June 2006 are:

- Acceptance by Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt of 30 harmonized healthcare IT standards from the Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP) and version 1.2 of the HITSP Interoperability Specifications
- Designation of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) as a Recognized Certification Body by the Department of Health and Human Services
- Formation of the Quality Workgroup by the American Health Information Community (AHIC) to address the need for the development of quality measures
- Creation of the State Alliance for e-Health by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to enable governors, elected officials and other policymakers to work together in seeking interstate- and intrastate-based health IT policies and practices
- Signing of Executive Orders encouraging state health IT initiatives by 10 governors (33 states now have an identifiable level of health IT planning)
- A renewed focus by Congress on personal health records, quality measurement and the establishment of independent e-health record banks
- Relaxation of the Stark Law and Anti-Kickback Statute to allow hospitals and health systems to subsidize the purchase of EHRs and other health IT solutions

With a proclamation from the President and resolutions passed by the U.S. House and Senate, National Health IT Week will coincide with several partner events. These include the sixth annual HIMSS Advocacy Day on May 15 and the fourth annual Collaborative Communications Summit, “Transforming Healthcare through Health Information Technology,” May 17-18.

Other featured events include the U.S. Senate Healthcare Quality Improvement and IT Caucus Technology Demonstration and Showcase, and “The Interoperable PHR: Use Cases in Transforming Healthcare” presented by CapMed, both on May 16, and the Virtual HIMSS Conference & Exposition May 15-16.

For more information on National Health IT Week, including a full list of partners, a calendar of events and online registration, visit www.HealthITWeek.org.

Julia Zarb, PhD, is president of Zarb Consulting (www.zarbconsulting.com).

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