
President George Bush Discusses Health Information Technology Benefits Cleveland Clinic January 27, 2005

-“Citizen” led conversation focuses on the value of information technology in the healthcare system and medicine-

After congratulating Mike Leavitt on his new position as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), the President emphasized his belief that information technology will:

- Change medicine
- Save money
- Save lives
- Make healthcare more responsive to citizen needs

The President posed what he views to be the fundamental question,

“Can we have a health care system that is available and affordable without the federal government running it?”

He stated,

“I believe the best health care system is one where the consumers, the patients, make the decisions.”

The President then touches on a few strategies he hopes to implement in order to bring the capital marketplace into the healthcare system:

- Expansion of Community Health Centers
- Continued Medicare reform
- Health Savings Accounts (HSA's)
- Association Health Plans
- Bringing generic drugs to the marketplace faster

The President introduced his 6 member panel and asked them to explain,

“How do we encourage information technology in a field like health care?”

Case #1 – Electronic Medical Records: Increased efficiency, Dr. to Dr.

Dr. David Brailer explained that the President asked him to help reduce obstacles and roadblocks, and work towards a goal of every American having electronic medical records in 10 years.

The President explained:

- A national system of information technology would allow medical records to be transmitted instantaneously; if you are in need of medical attention in a state where you do not reside, your pivotal health information will be available immediately in an emergent situation.
- For a national information technology system to work, the U.S. must have a judicial system that protects doctors from an onslaught of lawsuits.
- ***“We need medical liability reform now.”***

Case #2 – Electronic Medical Records: Privacy and interoperability

Dr. Harris, Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, explained that electronic medical records might actually increase privacy because if/when someone logs onto an electronic medical network it becomes a matter of record. He emphasized that there is no way of really knowing who looks at your paper file, but “we know” who has looked at your electronic file.

The President explained:

- It should be a priority to ensure that medical records remain a private matter
- The number of electronic medical networks is beginning to grow and we need to ensure that we have a national standard in order to:
 - Maximize the effectiveness of electronic medical records
 - Ensure that information can flow from one network to another seamlessly (***interoperability***)

Case #3 – Electronic Medical Records: Increased efficiency, Dr. to patient

A witness explained that as a primary care/internal medicine physician with electronic medical records he is able to look/comment on laboratory data and send the patient a confidential message indicating that there are updated comments to view regarding his or her medical file. He added that a patient can also view all previous test results, as well as all doctor notes. This feature allows patients to view and digest their medical history without the pressure of having to think of questions/understand complicated information in the examining room or on the phone.

The President commented:

- Efficiency will help Drs. save time and patients save money
- When you spread savings across the national spectrum, you can save ***up to 20%*** of the cost of healthcare

Case #4 – Electronic Medical Records: Patient information/education

A patient explained that electronic exchange has allowed her to gain more information, become more involved, and feel more educated as to her medical condition and treatment.

The President stressed electronic medical records:

- give patients a feeling of liberation
- ease nervousness associated with medical terms and Drs. because patients are more informed

Case #5 – Electronic Medical Records: Testament to impact

A witness explained that his organization started utilizing information technology in March of 2003, and although many physicians were initially reluctant, the majority of participants now view the system as vital.

The President emphasized:

- Electronic medical records are at the initial stages of implementation, but once absorbed they will not only save time and lives, but also reform the healthcare system for the better

Case #6 – Electronic Medical Records: Small practice implementation/economies of scale

A Dr. has a small practice (6 Drs.) and when the practice opened in 2000, they made a decision to implement a completely digital office. This choice has proven to be the right decision; when the practice opened an additional office, there was no question as to whether or not to implement electronic records.

President commented:

- This case refutes the notion that there has to be economies of scale in order to benefit from information technology
- The benefits prove to outweigh the costs
- Drs. using information technology are expanding instead of going out of business