

# Coalition for Improving Patient Care through Information Technology (CIPCIT)

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- Fact:** The current payment or reimbursement system compensates physicians and hospitals based on the number of visits and procedures provided. A new model should be developed that compensates for quality outcomes. This new model would shift healthcare from treating diseases, to preventing diseases.
- Fact:** U.S. healthcare is the most expensive in the world. Unfortunately, it is also the poorest quality among the industrialized nations.
- Higher incidence of chronic diseases than European countries
- Fact:** A major reason for this dichotomy is that information technology is not currently being used to improve patient care. IT is now limited to electronic versions of paper transactions, and primarily used for billing and financial purposes.
- Fact:** Only about 10% of the 5,000 hospitals in the U.S. have Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems. The reasons:
- Too expensive
  - Too complicated and time consuming for healthcare workers to use
  - Incompatible with legacy systems
- Fact:** The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has allocated \$30 billion in funds to stimulate the adoption of EMR & EHR systems by local hospitals and create a nationwide health IT infrastructure.
- Fact:** It is the will of Congress that these dedicated ARRA funds be used to reimburse hospitals for acquiring information technology that *"improves healthcare quality, reduces medical errors, reduces health disparities and advances the delivery of patient-centered medical care."*
- Fact:** The key to achieving the will of Congress rests with the definition of **"meaningful use"** of **"certified EHR technology."** The official definition of **"meaningful use"** is now open for public comment by the Department of Health & Human Services.
- Fact:** The ARRA funds will only be used to reimburse hospitals for IT investments in EHRs & EMRs that meet the HHS definition of **"meaningful use"** and that achieve the criteria for **"certified EHR technology,"** which has yet to be established.
- Fact:** To achieve the ARRA's mandate that the \$30 billion in stimulus funds be focused on improving patient care through EHR & EMR information technology (not on billing and financial transaction technology), HHS regulations must define the criteria for **"certified EHR technology."**
- Fact:** Current IT healthcare systems only record transactions. They are not designed to help physicians, nurses and hospitals better understand what's happening to the patient and to improve the quality of patient care. Current healthcare IT systems do nothing to help deliver better patient care. But they could! It is the role of government to provide incentives that help develop IT capabilities that will radically change the practice, delivery and quality of healthcare.

In order to delivery 21<sup>st</sup> century, high quality patient care, “**Certified EHR technology**” must be designed to include the following capabilities:

- **Evidence-based clinical decision support**
  - Helps healthcare providers establish optimal treatment protocols & standards (Example: Providing patients with heart attacks symptoms an aspirin as a first step before proceeding with further tests because it has been definitely established that aspirin mitigates heart muscle damage and saves lives)
- **Physician order entries**
  - Electronic entries reduce medical errors caused by misreading a doctor’s hand-written orders or prescriptions. IT capabilities will flag any irregularities that are inconsistent with optimal treatment protocols.
- **Provide medical search capabilities**
  - Approximately 25,000 research reports are published annually from around the world- far too much for any physician to be familiar with. EHR technology must contain search capabilities that will link healthcare providers with the latest clinical & research information on drug and treatment options related to a patient’s symptoms & condition.
- **Data-driven process improvement**
  - To continue to improve the quality of patient care, healthcare providers must be able look at core measures and compare with best practices using EHR information technology.
- **Create an exchange of critical data & information**
  - EHR technology should be used to share and contribute to the body of medical knowledge with health organizations around the world to better understand, compare, diagnose and treat illnesses and medical conditions.
- **Integrated view of patient data**
  - EHRs must provide healthcare workers a complete picture of a patient’s medical history, treatment, lab & test results, and other vital data to accurately understand what’s happening to the patient, and to diagnose and treat the patient.
- **Easy to use**
  - The complexity of current EHR and EMR systems are so complicated and time consuming to operate that most physician practices remain paper based. This offers almost no opportunity to advance the quality and delivery of healthcare for patients.



The ARRA funds for EHRs & EMRs are at risk of being used to continue adopting current IT systems that do nothing to advance patient care.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to use IT to change the delivery of healthcare and harness knowledge to benefit patients.

The definition of “meaningful use” and the criteria to be established for “certified EHR technology” holds the key to the future of quality patient care.