

Launch of Key Global Healthcare Initiative - Alliance for Clinical Excellence (ACE) - to Determine the Benefit & Cost of IT in Healthcare

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Major industry leaders convene a structured global effort to help healthcare organizations deliver superior disease outcomes while reducing cost burdens

During the regional HIMSS Healthcare IT Conference in Kuala Lumpur, several organizations involved in the healthcare industry announced the launch of a key global initiative - the Alliance for Clinical Excellence (ACE).

ACE participants committed to the initiative at launch time were - the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, Hong Kong Society of Medical Informatics, iSoft, MOH Holdings Pte. Ltd, National University of Singapore School of Computing, Oracle, Orion Health and CHIK Services.

ACE seeks to address the fundamental and growing need for change in the way the healthcare industry evaluates the deployment of its IT systems. This crucial need has not yet been adequately met, with long term, potentially significant impact on effectiveness, safety and innovation in the industry.

ACE is a newly-launched global initiative, and will continue to seek more participants.

ACE was formed in response to a growing global demand in the healthcare industry for predictive, evidence-based metrics to determine the cost-and-benefit equation of IT in Healthcare

While there are currently several statutory and regulatory boards supporting the definition and adoption of IT Standards in the industry, e.g. HL7, there are still fundamental 'gaps' that remain:

There is insufficient evidence of the value of IT in healthcare in published literature, and worse, No consensus on the definition of value of IT itself.

The ACE initiative proposes to deliver crucial value-based metrics for healthcare IT focusing holistically on two broad areas:

Contribute in improving disease outcomes - the basic essence of healthcare's mission (Quality of Care, Mortality, Morbidity and Safety)

Contribute in reducing the burden of healthcare spending - this has been identified as the principal challenge to achieving a sustainable long-run fiscal policy for the industry

ACE is a multi-year effort and aims to deliver answers on two fronts:

Helping to create objective assessments of the benefits and costs of IT and related processes that can be applied across contexts, cultures or medical regimes. Present efforts are piecemeal, fragmented, and cultural or context-bound and thus not easily replicable nor transferable.

Recommending and enabling the healthcare enterprise to incorporate these assessments into their daily practice - so that they are able to make evidence-based decisions on the use of IT.

The immediate priorities for the ACE participants will be to work on defining the best approach and methodologies to address these challenges in a global setting. It is likely ACE will have a consolidated working group structure that will focus on specific areas of healthcare IT, by priority. Finally, ACE will be mapping out specific deliverables and announcement milestones.

While the ACE has begun with a cluster of participating organizations, it will continue to actively seek more partners from the healthcare stakeholder environment, including regulatory authorities, healthcare providers, academia, systems and solutions implementers, and technology providers.

"Unlike the prescription of drugs, the demand for evidence-based metrics on the net value of IT Systems in Healthcare is still outstanding," explained Mehdi Khaled, vice president, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Oracle Asia Pacific & Japan. "This demand has been accelerated by an amplified volume and complexity of IT deployments in hospitals worldwide"

"As a health informatics professional body, we constantly grapple with the lack of standardized and consistent standards when benchmarking healthcare IT systems," said CP Wong, chairman, Hong Kong Society of Medical Informatics. "An initiative like ACE is timely and urgent in bringing a global consensus on the cost and benefits of IT in Healthcare. It has the potential to break the barriers to adopting healthcare IT effectively globally."