



Interview with Dr. Hobson, CMO at Orion Health

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CMIO Magazine: How has the CMO role evolved for you?

Dr. Hobson: My clinical experience began in 1982 as an internal medicine doctor in New Zealand for a six-hospital health system. After 10 years of practice, right around 1992, our organization introduced electronic billing, scheduling and electronic registration solutions. By 1994 we shared lab and radiology results across the system and in 1996 we started to use full featured EMR systems which included order management and e-prescribing (CPOE).

As a result, starting in the mid 90s, I became very interested in informatics and decided to go back to school for a degree program in HealthCare Informatics focusing on modernizing health systems and trying to integrate forward thinking technology solutions into existing hospital and ambulatory systems. At this time, I was asked by hospital management to get involved with the implementation of an EMR system. In 2006, I accepted the role of CMIO at Orion Health where I have been involved with a number of successful integration and EMR projects especially large EHR projects in North America

CMIO Magazine: How would you categorize your roles and responsibilities?

Dr. Hobson: My role in HealthCare informatics and with Orion Health began as that of a project manager responsible for clinical applications, from product design through implementation and integration. I also began chairing design committees such as discharge letter design. Similar to many of my peers, I am frequently the liaison person between the IT group, the clinical staff and executive management.

I am involved with many executive sponsored events throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. I work closely with senior executives to understand the business drivers and their impact on our applications. Certainly with ARRA and the stimulus incentives, I am working closely with our product development team to ensure that our products are meeting the certification requirements. Orion Health has always believed in designing and developing software for physicians by physicians, ensuring that we meet all of their needs.

I work with my counterparts from other hospital organizations to analyze requirements, develop prototypes, and enhance and develop our product line accordingly. Some of these initiatives include:

1. The portal solution – this is an Internet-based solution for our providers to connect patients across a continuum. We have had great success in Canada and the U.S.
2. Disease Management – this is of great interest to me. I spent a great deal of my time developing and enhancing the health maintenance module of our product offering. We're expanding beyond the clinics and growing in the hospital arena. We are very much a patient-centric organization with a major focus on patients across the entity.
3. Large scale projects such as working in RHIOs; linking disease management and evidence based clinical pathways through to generation of the right electronic orders.
4. Outside of the U.S., I am focused on our product line and making sure it continues to provide value to our client base. Conduct gap analysis and provide recommendations to bridge the gap.
5. I like to be in the forefront of patient data reporting and to develop tools with our product line offerings that enhance not only the patient experience but that give providers access to accurate and timely data as they make clinical and non-clinical decisions for their practices.

CMIO Magazine: Your thoughts on the CMIO role?

Dr. Hobson: I spend a majority of my time client facing with our customer base. I find it more effective and efficient when I am working with a CMIO or a close equivalent, but that is not to say that interacting with project managers is not the best use of my time. Another way of looking at this is: As I evaluate our product offerings, such as the health maintenance module or the discharge summary letter and so on, it is far more effective to work with a peer and I find that the CMIO plays a bigger role within organizations as we all move toward a more patient-centric model.

CMIO Magazine: From a CPOE and an EMR perspective, do you see a value behind it?

Dr. Hobson: I've been working with electronic solutions, including EMR and CPOE, since the mid 90s and I can't imagine a clinical world without them. Just recently I was talking with a senior emergency room physician about the use of our clinical portal product. He said that it has literally "changed my life." A common question he now gets from his residents is "What was medicine like before this tool? How could you practice without it?"

There is a tremendous effort on the part of all vendors to make these products more useable and easy to implement with the ultimate goal of maintaining patient safety and improving clinical outcomes. There is additional value when a patient is able to view their medical records from home. There is value behind allowing physicians to have access to patient records remotely so that they can address clinical issues remotely. The electronic transformation has taken place in other industries for some time and it is exciting to see health care beginning to catch up.

CMIO Magazine: Any closing remarks?

Dr. Hobson: The CMIO role is important to me and to Orion Health. It provides a necessary element for the successful implementation of clinical systems. It allows for facilitation and communication between IT clinical and executive management departments.