

Successful EHR programs turn to Orion Health to solve the challenge of interoperability

The Obama administration's stimulus package aims to revolutionize healthcare delivery for every American.

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SANTA MONICA, CA, USA - (HealthTech Wire / News) - Interoperability holds the key to effectively transitioning to an electronic health record (EHR) system and active Health Information Exchanges (HIE) between healthcare organizations.

The Obama administration American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 outlines goals and grants for health IT investments to spur rapid adoption of electronic medical and health records and to facilitate the electronic exchange of health data.

One of the greatest challenges in the implementation of an EHR is the ability to exchange data between the numerous, disparate, health information systems (HIS) typically found at every healthcare facility.

Orion Health is a leading provider of clinical workflow and integration technology for eHealth. The New Zealand-based company with North American headquarters in Santa Monica provides solutions to help integrate patient health data and histories that form the basis of an EHR. Orion Health is in a unique position to help hospitals, governments and healthcare communities meet the challenges that arise from the Obama administration's goal to implement EHRs for every American by 2014.

Paul Viskovich, Orion Health North America and EMEA President, says interoperability is one of the key challenges facing healthcare facilities today.

"These monolithic hospital systems can't share data with one another and as a result, health information is held hostage within that system, which is often specific to a single department within the hospital," Viskovich says.

"Inefficiencies run from needing to enter data multiple times, backlogs of data entry increasing the length of time to obtain test results and security and privacy issues. The issue of interoperability must be addressed before a complete health record can be created."

Interoperability is the integration of disparate data across an organization or region to provide a complete picture of a patient's medical record. Orion Health has proven experience with the framework, technology, solution and methods to overcome interoperability challenges.

This best practice approach has enabled Orion Health to implement EHR solutions quickly, yet still provide a solution that can be extended to meet the demands and complexities of current and future health IT needs.

"Canada's provinces, like Alberta, have been able to make fantastic headway toward a pan-Canadian EHR by focusing on interoperability. Orion Health technology is integrating data across many of these provinces and providing healthcare professionals with the ability to access comprehensive patient data for improved diagnosis in a secure way."

Viskovich cautions organizations to think long term in their eHealth investments and ensure programs are sustainable and able to support strategic goals for maintaining and improving the population's health.

"The rush to implement systems should be tempered with the need to ensure a strategic framework for health records and systems that support the long-term goals of managing issues like chronic disease, immunizations and how data is tracked in general," Viskovich says.

Lynne Dunbrack, Program Director, Health Industry Insights, an IDC company says "Certainly the cost of EMRs and EHRs has long been a significant barrier to widespread provider adoption, but other barriers, such as the initial disruption to clinical workflow, will continue to persist. Throwing technology at a problem for technology's sake rarely solves anything. The same is true for deploying EMRs and EHRs."

Dunbrack and Program Director Marc Holland are co-authors of an upcoming report "The Economic Stimulus Bill: A 'HITECH HIT' " which is available from Health Industry Insights at www.healthindustry-insights.com.

Orion Health is participating in several wide-scale EHR programs, including province-wide programs in Canada, Maine's Health Infonet covering 44 hospitals, UCLA Medical Center.

Orion Health also is part of the technology powering Shared Health®, one of the largest public/private medical data-sharing initiatives of its kind in the U.S., which has already shown success in implementing and supporting a statewide health information exchange in the state of Tennessee.

The company's technology has been adopted as Canada Health Infoway's blueprint for pan-Canadian health data interoperability and had been certified as interoperable with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's systems for the rapid detection and response to illness.

Another solid example of Orion Health's expertise in the field is the implementation of an EHR across the state of New South Wales in Australia where the company provided software to create a solution for integrated data. The solution linked together disparate "islands" of information to improve the state's delivery of healthcare to its population of 6.5 million people.

On the other side of the world, an EHR project for Ib-Salut in the Balearic region, Spain, involving Orion Health began in 2005. Phase one of the project used integration technology from Orion Health along with its physician portal coupled with components from other partners. This first phase involved the full integration of the population database for the island region. It's an important step for Ib-Salut which has started a modernization program to develop its infrastructure to deal with a new concept of healthcare centered on patients.

Orion Health is participating in worldwide interoperability standards testing at the IHE Connectathons around the world to test the exchange of data between systems. For more information see www.orionhealth.com/products/concerto-portal/ihe-integration-statement