Welch Allyn

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Harry Reynolds, Jr.
Chairman
National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road
Room 2341
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Dear Chairman Reynolds:

Welch Allyn appreciates the opportunity to provide National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics Executive Subcommittee with its perspective on the appropriate criteria for "meaningful use" of health information technology (HIT).

Welch Allyn has served the health care community as a primary provider of medical products and services across frontline caregiver settings. Founded in 1915, Welch Allyn has remained committed to providing frontline caregivers the tools they need to solve their patient care challenges. It is because of that commitment to quality and innovation that has allowed company to become a leading provider of innovative medical diagnostic and therapeutic devices and solutions.

Physician practices will not only require assistance in selecting appropriate electronic health record (EHR) systems, but also in preparing to efficiently use the technology. The definition of "meaningful use" should allow and encourage physicians and hospitals to utilize resources that would provide technical assistance to efficiently select, implement, and fully utilize EHR systems.

A New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) article published on June 18, 2009, highlighted the fact that despite a clear market need and government push with incentives to move physicians to purchase electronic health records, adoption remains slow. According to the NEJM, only 33 percent of physician practices have purchased an EHR, however only half that group or 17 percent, have fully implemented their EHR for various reasons. Many failures are tied to inaccurate selection requirements and insufficient implementation preparation.

The top six issues listed in the study as major adoption barriers by MD's who had not yet purchased an EHR were: cost (66 percent); finding an EHR that meets needs (54 percent); uncertain return on investment (50 percent); system obsolescence (41 percent); loss of productivity during implementation (40 percent); and, the capacity to select, contract and implement (39 percent).[1] It is interesting to note that 26 percent of practices without an EHR, planned to purchase one within two years.

Welch Allyn believes that the key to making the most of an EHR system is in the organization and preparation for selection and implementation. Many practices do not prepare well because they do not have the knowledge required to manage such a complex task. In addition, many providers do not have a proven process, or the tools, or experience for selecting and implementing an EHR. As result, many practices either decide to watch from the sidelines, or struggle to realize the benefits of an EHR after purchase.

Welch Allyn will be launching an *EHR Prep-Select Program* this year. The program delivers a flexible set of expert consulting services designed to address the market need for execution of an efficient and successful EHR preparation and selection process for independent physician's offices.

To achieve a maximum return on our nation's investment, it is essential to build in device integration to ensure that clinical data also is both considered and allowed to shape the concept of meaningful use.

Providers who enlist expert, professional assistance to select and prepare for adoption as part of their EHR solution will maximize the usefulness of the technologies and lead to improvements in the quality, efficiency and safety of health care. Providers who utilize resources to efficiently select, implement, and fully utilize EHR systems will improve accuracy, efficiency, and use of time. Through appropriate selection and preparation for adoption of EHR, patients will be safer and providers will improve data accuracy by eliminating transcription errors and lost or mislabeled diagnostic test results. Providers can enhance their efficiency by eliminating duplicate patient data entry and several manual printing, scanning, and filing steps. Physicians and hospitals will save time and money by having immediate access to test results anytime, anywhere, and allow clinicians and staff to focus on patient care.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kim Townsend

Kim Townsend
Senior Counsel/Director of Government Affairs

[1] Electronic Health Records in Ambulatory Care- A National Survey of Physicians; N Engl J Med 2008;359:50-60.