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# Alliance for Nursing Informatics Statement to the National Committee for Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) Hearings on 'Meaningful Use' of Health Information Technology April 28-29, 2009

## Background

The Alliance for Nursing Informatics (ANI) is a collaboration of organizations that enables a unified voice for nursing informatics. ANI represents more than 5,000 nurse informaticists and brings together over 25 distinct nursing informatics groups in the United States. ANI crosses academia, practice, industry, and nursing specialty boundaries and works in collaboration with the nearly 3 million nurses in practice today. A full listing of the ANI membership organizations is available at: http://www.allianceni.org/members.asp

Nurses constitute the largest single group of healthcare professionals and serve as the providers and coordinators of care. In their front-line roles, nurses have a profound impact on the quality and effectiveness of healthcare and thus must be supported by electronic health records (EHR) that adequately enable their knowledge work. It is critical for nurses to be intensively involved in the development and adoption of standards that continue to impact the quality and efficiency of healthcare services. In that spirit we offer the following statement on the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) "meaningful use of certified EHR technology" and support previous testimony, which has been offered that concurs with the opinions put forth in this statement (J. Murphy Testimony April 28, 2009: Panel 6).

## Discussion

### Patient Centered Care Delivered by Inter-Disciplinary Teams

ANI recognizes that patient care invariably requires collaborative interactions among multiple clinicians from a broad array of specialties, often in different locations. As such, "meaningful use" should strive for nothing less than an integrated healthcare community, including the healthcare consumer, where enabling technologies promote usable, efficient and seamless information flow. Including information-rich, patient-centered documentation within the definition of "meaningful use" can enhance cross continuum communication, thereby enabling improved safety, quality, and processes of care delivery. In addition, ANI recommends expanding "meaningful use" to include any healthcare professional, for example registered nurses (RNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), serving diverse and underserved populations across the continuum of care. "Meaningful use" should encompass basic connections among acute, ambulatory, long-term, community-based, home care, and public health based settings whereby data and information necessary for managing these populations is shared. Basic data elements can be shared in early phases of "meaningful use" by taking a broader perspective utilizing documentation from all members of the clinical team. To meet this need, EHR systems should integrate patient care information from the patient, and all healthcare professionals, including the exchange of patient summary data after each transition of care. This integrated approach sets the foundation for evolutionary growth providing the building blocks for health information exchange between disparate HIT systems.

### Clinical Decision Support for Purposes of Safety and Quality

ANI supports the submission of quality measures to the Department of Health and Human Services using the processes and infrastructure as defined by the Healthcare Information

Technology Standards Panel (HITSP). Standardized clinical performance measures should be collected as a byproduct of care delivery and clinician documentation. This serves two important national goals: a) clinical decision support and trending in patient outcomes for real-time decision support and intervention at the point of care delivery, and b) the ability to aggregate enterprise-wide performance evaluation. A subset of existing National Quality Forum (NQF)) endorsed measures should be incorporated for acute and post acute care settings, including nursing sensitive measures and HITSP standards that can enhance decision support and clinical measure reporting.

**Standardized Infrastructure within the EHR**

ANI endorses the use of standards integrated across systems that record, transmit, collect, and share information in all settings of healthcare services. Standardized terminology supports data sharing, aggregation, identification, use of evidenced based practices, and development of integration of new evidence derived from clinical research. Recommendations from HITSP and Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) should be utilized to provide further guidance regarding standards use. Systems must enable the sharing of integrated information while maintaining patient privacy and allowing for de-identification of subjects involved in clinical research to generate new knowledge about health and healthcare services. This can be accomplished in a phased approach as the nation moves towards fully interoperable EHRs. ANI supports clear regulation and incentives to increase participation in the adoption and harmonization of documentation standards, thereby promoting interoperability of patient data gathered by healthcare professionals when utilizing EHRs across the care continuum.

**Summary of Recommendations**

- Include patient-centered documentation from all disciplines within the definition of "meaningful use"; initially focus on patient summary data at transitions of care
- Collect standardized clinical performance measures as a byproduct of care delivery and clinician documentation
- Submit quality measures to the Department of Health and Human Services and other reporting entities, by using processes and infrastructure defined by HITSP; initially focus on a subset of existing NQF-endorsed measures, and include nursing sensitive measures
- Use existing initiatives such as HITSP and IHE to guide standards use within all systems that record, transmit, collect, and share information for care delivery
- Expand the definition of "meaningful user" to encompass support of all healthcare professionals, including RNs and APRNs.

**Conclusion**

In closing, nurses hold a critical role as organizations continue to expand their focus on "meaningful use" by leveraging the data and information contained in electronic health records. With the passage of the ARRA, the nursing profession performs an instrumental role in the key areas of patient safety, change management, design, and usability of systems as evidenced in quality outcomes, enhanced workflow, and user acceptance. These areas highlight the value of these knowledge-based workers and their role in the adoption of health information technologies with greater integration across systems to deliver higher quality clinical applications in healthcare organizations.