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Privacy and Security of HIE: Patient consent is key

When it comes to privacy and security of health information exchange, there are still many issues and challenges that must be resolved. At the forefront is a patient's role in determining how their medical information is used and exchanged. Recently, an HHS advisory committee approved several recommendations from the privacy and security tiger team with regards to consumer choice in information exchange.

The recommendations included:

1. Requirement of consumer choice information exchange by the ONC
2. Provision of adequate time for consumers to determine whether or not they would like to give their consent

Central to this issue is the relationship between patient and provider. Rules can be set, but it is up to the provider to earn the trust of the patient and ensure that they are well educated on what happens to their data.

The tiger team will be providing the advisory committee with more recommendations on this issue next month. The committee will then vote on the complete set of patient consent recommendations in September.

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Meeting Stage 1 MU requirements inhibited by existing EHRs

Earlier this week, the American Medical Association (AMA) released a startling statement asserting that of the EHR's in existence today, none has the functional requirements needed to meet meaningful use requirements.

Among the issues that the AMA cited were:

1. inadequate timing

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2. high volume of measures
3. incentive exclusions for hospital-based services in an inpatient or ER setting
4. short timeframes for furnishing patient information electronically
5. unattainable threshold requirements
6. non-existent appeals process
7. usability concerns
8. requirement for early adopters to upgrade systems in order to meet certification criteria
9. no guarantees of EHR accuracy and operation

In an effort to overcome these obstacles, the AMA will be working closely with the ONC, CMS, and others to provide physicians with all of the tools and information they will need during the EHR process.

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FCC contributes \$400 million to broadband efforts

While most urban healthcare providers are focusing on achieving meaningful use, access to high-speed broadband is still standing in the way for rural communities. The FCC hopes to change this by working with public and nonprofit healthcare providers to expand connectivity to rural areas so that the providers in those locations can operate EHR's, telemedicine and other health IT technology.

To keep down the costs, the FCC will assume half of the recurring costs each month for rural providers. This effort will bring broadband connectivity to approximately 2,000 rural facilities, bumping up the previous connection total to 12,000.

The FCC will release an NPRM for the rural broadband program in the Federal Register next month, which will then be available for public comment.

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