Verizon Provides Tips to Help the Transition to Electronic Health Records
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Guidance for Heath Care Professionals Moving to Digitized Data

BASKING RIDGE, N.J., June 5, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- To help the nation's health care providers move from paper-based records to digitized data, Verizon has outlined tips for transitioning to electronic health records. A digital collection of a patient's medical history, EHRs enable faster, more accurate exchange of patient information among payers, providers and patients while enhancing portability of the information.

"We are committed to empowering the health care ecosystem to embrace heath IT and EHRs as the means to improving patient care while controlling costs," said Peter Tippett. "EHRs serve as the fundamental building blocks to digitizing all future health care data. This digital age will help reduce medical errors and redundant patient testing, while improving access and storage of patient information."

The following tips can simplify the navigation process for health care professionals moving to EHR system.

1)   Put the Patient First: By focusing on what will improve patient care, you will be able to receive returned benefits. For example, EHRs can reduce the chances of patients receiving medications they are allergic to, which in turn can prevent lengthened hospital stays or lawsuits.

2)   Maintain Security of Patient Information: Protect patient information from hackers. According to the "Verizon 2012 Data Breach Investigations Report," health care and social assistance industry groups represented more than 7 percent of the total breaches Verizon analyzed in 2011.

3)   Be Mindful of Compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act: Compliance teams must be aware of the challenges in protecting the privacy of patient information once it goes digital. While smart device users are used to accessing and sharing any information they please, HIPAA requirements must be addressed within the digital transition. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology has a helpful resource page for health care providers, with information about EHR privacy and security: *http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/privacy-security* .

4)   Evaluate Workflow Integration: Health care organizations must evaluate the impact of EHR integration into their clinical administrative work flow. Typically, not enough time is devoted to the upfront planning with end users to help with continuous work flow. This step will help keep costs and time projections on target.

5)   Communicate and Educate: Communicate your EHR program goals to the entire staff. For many, embracing a new technology can be a difficult and unwelcomed challenge. Knowledge is power, and the more staffers know about EHR benefits, the more likely they will be to embrace the technology. Consider hosting training seminars, and establish staff resources such as a frequently-asked-questions sheet.

6)   Influence the Influencers: Work with your entire staff, and help early adopters and IT leaders set examples and build proof that the EHRs help improve processes, efficiencies and patient care.

7)   Embrace the Consumerization of IT: Various physicians prefer different smart devices. Supporting the devices they prefer can help with the transition to unfamiliar EHR software.

8)   Act with Urgency: Health care organizations should act quickly to achieve full financial incentives and avoid future problems. Financial penalties under Medicare are slated to begin in 2015 for doctors and hospitals that are not using EHRs. An official government "How to Implement EHRs" guide is available at *healthit.gov/providers-professionals/ehr-implementation-steps* .

9)   Think Long Term: Health care providers must have a long-term view to be able to meet future requirements. EHRs are the keystone to transforming health care, and implementers must create a solid IT foundation for the future of digital patient information exchange. This requires securing long-term funding to ensure yearly progress.

10)   Learn about EHR Incentives: Know your eligibility for EHR incentives, and plan to execute in compliance. Visit the CMS Path to Payment site to help you decide whether you qualify for Medicaid or

Medicare incentives, and which one to choose: *http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/PathtoPayment.html*.

11)   Seek Certifications: After launching your EHR program, you will need to understand "meaningful use" (a criteria for ensuring users are able to benefit from the use of EHRs) and certification eligibility for EHRs. Certifications will help ensure that your EHRs can be readily shared across the health care ecosystem, and that the EHRs are useful to your practice and patients.

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