



Healthcare IT Soars in a Diving Economy

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Are you hopeful about technology and the changing healthcare industry or do you find yourself discouraged about the economy and employment outlook? Recent headlines about healthcare, technology, and job statistics are often discouraging, but there is every reason to be encouraged about all three of these topics for people involved in implementing an electronic health record (EHR).

In April, 2009, the ANIA/CARING (American Nursing Informatics Association/Capitol Area Roundtable on Informatics NursinG) conference was held in Las Vegas. Presenters shared statistics on past and current trends in documenting healthcare and optimistically looked toward the future. Some of the promising statistics follow.

1. Exponential growth is anticipated in a number of quality measures required of hospitals by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This implies robust additions to the software build to incorporate these measures, additional training to hospital staff in order to address new information, and a more comprehensive and effective EHR. The number of quality measures required each year are:
 - 2003: 10 measures
 - 2006-2007: 21 measures
 - 2008: 27 measures
 - 2009: 30 measures
 - 2010: 72 measures
 - 2011: 127 measures
 - In addition there are 49 ambulatory care measures in 5 areas: behavioral health, bone disease, diabetes, heart disease, and prenatal

2. Addressing non-reimbursement for preventable conditions (“Never Events”) will present opportunities for building screening, documentation, and reporting tools into the EHR. Examples are:
 - Pressure ulcers
 - Surgical site infections
 - Vascular catheter-associated infections
 - Air emboli
 - Blood incompatibility
 - Catheter-associated urinary tract infections
 - Hospital acquired injuries
 - Preventable events (objects left during surgery)
 - Surgical site infections
 - DVT or PE following certain orthopedic surgeries
 - Manifestations of poor glycemic control

3. Leapfrog certification and other government initiatives require decision support tools to be built into the EHR. The implication, again, is more detailed and effective tools to be incorporated into the build and additional training. The Leapfrog ambulatory standards require these specific reminders:

- CAD
 - Aspirin and beta blocker use
 - Lipid measurement/management
 - ACE inhibitor after MI if evidence of systolic dysfunction
- Diabetes
 - HbA1C measurement/management
 - Lipid measurement/management
 - Aspirin and ACE inhibitor use
 - Eye and foot exams
- Cerebrovascular disease
 - Warfarin use in atrial fibrillation
- Prevention
 - Adult immunizations (influenza, pneumonia)
 - Pediatric immunizations
 - Breast cancer screening
 - PAP smears
 - Colorectal cancer screening
- CHF
 - ACE inhibitor use
 - Documentation of systolic function measurement
 - Foot exams

4. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), (the economic stimulus plan), includes major healthcare IT provisions. This includes \$19 billion in incentives to accelerate adoption of Electronic Health Records. All incentives are tied to the “Meaningful Use of Certified EHRs”, with the definitions of “Meaningful Use” and “Certified” soon to be decided. Incentives include:

- Physician incentive: up to \$64 thousand per physician over a 6-year period
- Hospital incentive: \$2 to \$8 million plus per hospital for certified core clinical systems
- Hospitals with hospital-employed physicians may be eligible for both the physician and hospital incentives

The hospitals will receive incentive payments over 4 years, with the funds becoming available in 2011 for hospitals who are “meaningful users of certified EHRs”. Meaningful users in 2011 will receive 100%, 75% in 2012, 50% in 2013 and 25% in 2014. Hospitals starting an IT initiative in fiscal year 2015 will lose any IT subsidy and those not having an EHR after fiscal 2016 may be penalized by deductions.

The EHR has already made documenting health care more effective and efficient. The growing demand to make EHR’s more comprehensive will ensure the need for skilled IT resources in the future. See why you have every right to be optimistic in your career choice? For information on how VCS can help fill your growing needs, please contact us at (610) 444.1233 or www.getvitalized.com. You can also visit our website at www.getvitalized.com.