

NHII FACT SHEET

National Health Information Infrastructure

Introduction

On November 15, 2001, the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics issued the following challenge:

We as a Nation have a timely opportunity and an urgent need to build a 21st-century health support system – a comprehensive, knowledge-based system capable of providing information to all who need it to make sound decisions about health. Such a system can help realize the public interest related to disease prevention, health promotion, and population health.

Conscious that a properly maintained and funded information infrastructure is key to meeting the healthcare industry's current and future needs, HIMSS announced the launch of the NHII Task Force - the first of its kind – on October 16, 2002.

Overview

The creation of the NHII Task Force, which came on the heels of the National Preparedness & Response Task Force (September 30, 2002), chose to focus on activities to help the healthcare industry create and adopt a national health information infrastructure (NHII). The task force envisions this infrastructure as a comprehensive system capable of providing trustworthy information to all healthcare decision makers. Recognizing that the NHII will not be achieved through the efforts of any one entity, the task force initiative works collaboratively with other organizations to harness the depth and breadth of its collective memberships. There is a strong commitment to providing extensive education opportunities for members and the industry at-large, as well as conducting proactive outreach to both the legislative and executive branches of our government.

Membership

The HIMSS NHII Task Force, chaired by Dr. C. Martin Harris, includes representatives from provider organizations, supplier and consulting firms, the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics, the Centers for Disease Control, the Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs.

Activities To Date

Initial projects for the HIMSS NHII Task Force include creating an inventory of existing technologies and practices; writing a gap analysis on developmental needs; encouraging multiple sources of increased funding that could help the industry create an NHII; actively supporting state initiatives that may serve as test beds for a national initiative; and writing a position statement. The HIMSS NHII task force has made great strides in a very short time and will be working in partnership with HIMSS Advocacy program to effectively promote an NHII on Capitol Hill.

In addition, a 90-minute audio education program was produced for the Task Force, Board of Directors, Advocacy Committee, and members of HIMSS. The audio education program, presented by Jeff Blair, provides a comprehensive tutorial of the creation of the NHII concept, the vision of NCVHS, and recommendations for realizing the vision. To take advantage of this tutorial, please visit the HIMSS Website at www.himss.org.

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One initiative called Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) seeks to achieve interoperability across all the key health departments. For example, radiology is complete – a technical framework, well tested and demonstrated – exists and is in operation. Next to follow will be cardiology, laboratory, pharmacy/medication management, as well as the IT infrastructure. Through the IHE initiative, the task force believes that the NHII can actually be accomplished – and even, provide the foundation on which it is built.

Through educational sessions around the country, HIMSS convenes experts who present real-world examples of the adoption of standards, interoperability, and key technologies that improve the quality and efficiency of patient care. In addition, HIMSS took an early lead in bar coding; publishing a position statement, a meta-analysis of bar-coding technology, and will publish a readiness assessment/implementation guide.

Conclusion

Future plans are expansive – yet focused. The HIMSS NHII task force is committed to supporting the Department of Health & Human Services NHII work by leading the effort to convene an annual NHII Summit in Washington D.C. The HIMSS Board of Directors encourages and supports the pursuit of federal grants from the government and foundations. Proposed projects revolve around harnessing members' knowledge and expertise in information technology and management systems to improve the quality and efficiency of patient care delivery.

Through the expansion and assertive engagement in key public policy activities, the task force is reaching out to congressional staffers to provide education on the NHII. Plans include opening doors for elected officials and their health staffers into various facilities in their home districts so that they can learn, first hand, the needs and opportunities awaiting health delivery.

Finally, and most importantly, the HIMSS NHII initiative is committed to working collaboratively with other organizations involved in this national initiative. Redundant or duplicate efforts are a terrible waste of scarce and precious resources. The efforts of NHII Senior Executive Dr. Bill Yasnoff, should be applauded as he uncovers many complementary efforts that will work to enhance everyone's chance for success.

For more information regarding the HIMSS NHII task force, please contact Dave Roberts, director of public policy, at droberts@himss.org.

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