



Statement for the Record  
Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
Fourth in Series of Hearings on Health Information Technology  
Submitted by Mary Griskewicz,  
Chair of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society  
(HIMSS) Advocacy & Public Policy Steering Committee  
April 20, 2006

Madame Chair, Congresswoman Johnson, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to submit this statement for the record. My name is Mary Griskewicz and I have the pleasure of serving as the 2005-2006 Chair of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Advocacy & Public Policy Steering Committee. I live in Connecticut and work professionally for GE Healthcare, Global Marketing Director of Industry and Government Affairs.

HIMSS is one of the largest healthcare IT trade associations, representing over 17,000 individual members and the 280 corporate members who employ more than 1.2 million people across the United States. On behalf of HIMSS members and the thousands of professionals in the healthcare IT community, we commend you and the members of the Subcommittee on Health for your leadership in promoting initiatives that increase the use of information technology throughout the healthcare industry. HIMSS' vision is to advance the best use of information and management systems for the

betterment of healthcare. Our mission is to lead change in the healthcare IT and management systems field through knowledge sharing, advocacy, collaboration, innovation, and community affiliations.

Saving lives and improving patient safety are major goals of the healthcare industry, given the high occurrence of medical errors resulting in up to 100,000 lives lost and up to \$29 billion of costs each year in the US alone, according to the Institute of Medicine report, “To Err is Human.” Furthermore about 3.7 percent of hospitalizations may be associated with error, and 13.6 percent of these lead to death.

Studies have proven healthcare IT saves money and saves lives. The Center for IT Leadership suggests that utilizing interoperable ambulatory EHRs alone will save \$112 billion a year, representing approximately 7 percent of healthcare spending. The ONC conservatively estimates that annual savings due to widespread EHR adoption are likely to range between 7.5 and 30 percent of annual healthcare spending. These are important savings targets as healthcare now consumes 17 percent of our nation’s gross domestic product, by far the largest percentage of any nation in the world.

This month, HIMSS’ Patient Safety and Quality of Care Steering Committee participated in the National Quality Foundation’s (NQF) balloting for National Voluntary Consensus Standards for the Prevention and Care of Venous Thromboembolism (VTE). According to NQF, VTE is the most

common preventable cause of death in hospitals. It afflicts 900,000 Americans every year, in 500,000 people this condition advances to pulmonary thromboembolism (hypertension in the lungs) and results in death for approximately 300,000. The US health IT industry is a world leader and this is unacceptable.

IT has transformed every industry in America and the world and we can and will do the same for healthcare. Americans deserve much more than the current mediocre and often failing healthcare delivery system.

There are hospitals, clinics, physician practices, and businesses that are using healthcare IT to save money and save lives every day. In fact, there are numerous success stories across the country that should be replicated. For example, Wayne Obstetrics and Gynecology, with more than 6,000 patient encounters a year, is a model of excellence for small provider practices in a rural setting. Based in Jessup, Georgia this solo practice views its EHR as a distinct asset in the volatile world of OB malpractice.

We know through EHRs, standards, and legal and financial incentives, we can and must do better. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues to improve America's health system.