

TO: John Tooker, MD, MBA, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer,
American College of Physicians

FROM: Amy Helwig, MD, MS, Medical Director, Clinical Strategy and Policy Advisor,
eHealth Initiative and Foundation

COPIES: Janet M. Marchibroda, Chief Executive Officer, eHealth Initiative and Foundation

SUBJECT: eHealth Initiative Support of the American Health Information Community
Workgroup for the Electronic Health Record

DATE: February 21, 2006

The purpose of this memorandum is to express the eHealth Initiative's interest in serving as a resource for the American Health Information Community Workgroup for the Electronic Health Record: Laboratory Data Information Exchange (EHR Workgroup).

Background

We understand that the broad charge of the EHR Workgroup is to make recommendations to the American Health Information Community ("Community") on ways to achieve widespread adoption of certified EHRs, minimizing gaps in adoption among providers. We further understand that the specific charge of the EHR Workgroup is to make recommendations to the Community so that within one year, standardized, widely available and secure solutions for accessing current and historical laboratory results and interpretations is deployed for clinical care by authorized parties.

The eHealth Initiative and its Foundation (eHI) are independent, non-profit affiliated organizations whose missions are the same: to drive improvement in the quality, safety, and efficiency of healthcare through information and information technology. We are pleased to express our support, including the provision of insights, materials and resources to the EHR Workgroup to support its goals, objectives and charge.

Overview of eHealth Initiative and its Foundation

As noted above, the mission of eHI is to drive improvements in the quality, safety, and efficiency of healthcare through information and information technology. eHI represents the multiple and diverse stakeholders in healthcare who want to improve health and healthcare through information and information technology, including consumer and patient groups, employers and purchasers, health plans, HIT suppliers, hospitals, laboratories, medical and pharmaceutical device manufacturers, practicing clinicians, public health agencies, quality improvement organizations, standards groups, and state, regional and community-based health information organizations.

Practicing clinicians play a critical role in eHI's membership. The American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Medical Group Association, the American Medical Association, and the Medical Group Management Association are all members of eHI and play an active and critical role in the development of common principles and policies, as well as useful tools and resources to support implementation in the field.

In addition, thousands of stakeholders involved in state, regional and community-based health information exchange efforts are involved in eHealth Initiative's various programs, initiatives and learning forums. In 2005, the eHealth Initiative launched a Connecting Communities Membership Program, a rapidly growing coalition with the involvement of stakeholders engaged in 260 state, regional and community-based initiatives focused on healthcare transformation through health information exchange.

eHI is focused on four areas of activity, which are outlined as follows:

- Developing knowledge, or common principles, policies and best practices for supporting transformation through health information exchange and other means
- Advocating for policy change at the national and state levels
- Providing seed funding for emerging state, regional and community-based multi-stakeholder initiatives
- Providing "hands-on help" or technical assistance to emerging collaborative efforts at the state, regional and local levels.

To support its work, eHI has launched a number of working groups focused on supporting healthcare transformation through HIT and health information exchange, including the Working Group for HIT in Small Practices which was launched in 2004. Co-chaired by Peter Basch, MD, Medical Director, eHealth, Medstar Health, Co-Chair of PEHRC and David Kibbe, MD, Director, Center for Information Technology, AAFP and Co-Chair of PEHRC, the Working Group developed practical work products and strategies to improve the value proposition of EHRs and other HIT products and services aimed at the small and medium size ambulatory care sector and increase adoption of HIT products and services and support clinicians in improving quality, enhancing safety, and increasing efficiency. Key deliverables developed in 2004 and 2005 included a roadmap for achieving connectivity between labs and small physician practice EHRs, a set of tools to support practice redesign, and standard tools to assist physician practices with the purchase of EHRs.

In 2006, the Working Group is turning its focus more specifically on the goals of practice transformation and quality—key components of which include both information technology and information mobilization across healthcare organizations. Led by Michael S. Barr, MD, MBA, FACP, Vice President, Practice Advocacy and Improvement for the American College of Physicians and Joseph M. Heyman, MD, elected Secretary of the American Medical Association Board of Trustees, the purpose of the Working Group is to conduct research, assess lessons learned from clinicians and identify best practices for transforming healthcare through HIT adoption and health information exchange. The Working Group will synthesize knowledge and experiences into a set of common principles, a roadmap, case studies, resources and tools that will be offered to the field to support practice transformation and improvements in quality and safety in healthcare.

As in 2004 and 2005, the Working Group will place special focus on the needs and requirements of small physician practices. The Working Group has significant involvement of medical societies, including those who are eHI members (see above) and also reaches out to practicing clinicians who work in small practices to support their active involvement, offering scholarships for travel to meetings as needed.

The work of the Working Group is made available to the public, free of charge, through eHI's Connecting Communities Toolkit (<http://toolkit.ehealthinitiative.org/>). Several resources and tools are included in the Toolkit today, including the following:

1. Common principles, roadmap, case studies, and glossary
2. eHI-developed materials including the following:
 - **eHI Laboratory to Practice Connectivity Report.** Developed by the Working Group under the leadership of William Braithwaite, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Officer of eHI and Alan E. Zuckerman, MD, FAAP, this report cites that electronic interoperability between small practices and the rest of the healthcare environment requires a universal, 'plug-and-play' strategy for implementation of connectivity and secure messaging. This report identifies the barriers to laboratory-to-practice interoperability, the opportunities to overcome them, and recommends a two year roadmap to resolution.
 - **eHI Master Quotation Guide.** Developed by the Working Group under the leadership of Joseph Heyman, MD, this tool provides a standard approach to master quotation, contracts and related business practices that can be used by prospective physician practice EHR purchasers and the vendors of these products to decrease the complexity of purchase and migration to electronic health records and other HIT in the small and medium size medical practice. The Guide is designed to assist medical practices in comparing the costs of EHR vendors. It is intended to help physicians, clinicians, practice administrators and other decision makers compare quotations and bids from vendors for EHR software, implementation and training services as well as support and maintenance. This guide is for individuals who have already gone through an initial selection process, compared major features and functions, and are seeking to compare cost information from candidate vendors on an "apples to apples" basis.
 - **eHI Cost Model for Health Information Exchange.** Developed with the support of the Working Group for Connecting Communities, this tool provides leaders in state, regional and community-based collaboratives with a model for assessing the costs of implementing various functionalities of health information exchange, including those related to laboratory connectivity.
3. References and links to important insights and guides developed by others, including those developed by medical societies such as the AAFP, ACP, MGMA, and state medical societies; academic centers; quality improvement organizations; consulting firms; philanthropic organizations, and governmental entities such as AHRQ, CDC, CMS, and ONC.

Summary

In summary, the eHealth Initiative and its Foundation would be delighted to provide the resources, tools and insights developed by the Working Group for Small Practices, as well as the work conducted by eHI broadly to support the EHR Workgroup.