



Quest Physician Update

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Transforming Healthcare-Together.

Dear Colleagues,

Last week, Quality Quest hosted the “Central Illinois EHR/HIE Summit: Modernizing Communication to Improve Patient Care” in three cities. On Tuesday, our team was at the iHotel in Champaign, Wednesday at the Embassy Suites in East Peoria and Thursday at the Marriott in Normal.

The purpose of the event was to share information about our region’s transition from paper-based communication to electronic health records with physicians and other healthcare professionals. While all of our speakers did a wonderful job, I’d like to highlight some specific comments here:

While there has been lots of committee work and “pilot” effort happening around electronic health records and health information exchange over the past few years, regional HIE’s and states have struggled to find traction. Laura Kolkman described the landscape as barren and rocky, until last February when ARRA (American Recovery & Reinvestment Act) was enacted. ARRA has brought a number of new programs to fruition. In addition to the Medicaid and Medicare incentives that go directly to physician practices and hospitals that are able to prove that they are making “meaningful use” of electronic health records, we’re seeing federal investments in workforce training, regional technical assistance, FCC Broadband and state-level HIE infrastructure.

From Nebraska, we heard that the future of HIE holds significant promise for the physicians, hospitals and patients who participate. The Nebraska health information exchange, called NeHii, is similar in size and scope to what we envision a regional HIE would look like in central Illinois. NeHii currently serve about 1.5 million people, with some large urban centers and lots of rural area to cover.

Dr. Harris Frankel, a Nebraska physician who joined us only for the East Peoria session, spoke passionately about what NeHii has done for his practice. He told us how he had seen a new patient in his practice just the day before who had recently received services from three different healthcare systems in the Omaha area. Under the “old system”, Dr. Frankel had to log into three different places to gather the patient’s information and then mentally collate the relevant data. He estimated that this required 20 minutes of his 30 minute appointment slot with his patient. With NeHii in place, he only had to log-in one place and he had the information he needed within 30 seconds, freeing him to spend more of the 30 minute appointment in face-to-face time with the patient.

Mary McGinnis from the Illinois Office of Health Information Technology and Mike Gaffney and Quincy Grimes from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services attended the Summit to share State plans for the future. Illinois has received \$18.8 million from the federal government to support health information exchange development here in Illinois. The State is required to submit a plan to the Office of National Coordinator for HIT by June 30th of this year.

Also at the Summit, we unveiled three new videos which capture central Illinoisans talking about their experiences in getting health information from one place to another. Each video is about 4 minutes long. You’ll find them here: <http://sites.google.com/site/centralilhieplanning/>