

Module 12 - Wednesday Discussion - March/April/May Discussion Group

Group Directed Learning Activities

Post within your March/April/May discussion groups your answers to the following:

1. What are the 4 goals of the Federal Health IT strategic plan?
2. What health policies and standardization need to be in place to make it happen?
3. What are the most recent activities from the Health IT Policy Committee and the Health IT Standards Committee?

(Hint: **ONC** (<https://www.healthit.gov/topics>) and **HHS** (<https://www.hhs.gov/regulations/index.html>) use these resource to answer the questions)

Note: There is no word count limit for this post!

Reminder: Formal writing; use APA style; cite your sources.



Student #1



The Federal Government has a plan to improve the health of the nation with informatics. The four goals of the Federal Health IT strategic plan are (1) Advance Person-Centered and Self-Managed Health, (2) Transform Health Care Delivery and Community Health, (3) Foster Research, Scientific Knowledge, and Innovation, and (4) Enhance Nation's Health IT Infrastructure (Federal, 2020). These goals are supported by policy and standardization ambitions.

The objective in order to advance person-centered and self-managed health is to encourage personal, family, and care provider health organization and engagement. The first strategy of this objective is to “[d]isseminate educational resources and explore policy options that allow individuals choice and convenience in using apps and tools to securely compile, aggregate, and use health information to achieve health and wellness goals” (Federal, 2020). This approach plans to give learning material about options for individuals to take control of their health. An example of this could be MyFitness pal, an app used to track nutrition intake (MyFitnessPal, 2020). This app helps individuals be conscious about their health through their food.

Falling under the transform health care delivery and community health plan, is the objective to “[i]mprove health care quality, access, and experience through safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and person-centered care” (Federal, 2020). This objective can be implemented by expanding the integration and application of certified health IT across healthcare (Federal, 2020). Health Information Exchange (HIE) can “potentially improve patient safety, care coordination, quality of care and efficiency, facilitate public health efforts, and reduce mortality and healthcare costs” (Esmaelzadeh & Sambasivan, 2016).

The third goal is to foster research, scientific knowledge, and innovation. This goal is guided by the objective to enhance access to and usability of high-tech electronic health data and services. One strategy to succeed in this objective is to “[p]ioneer a new scientific model that emphasizes engaged participants, responsible data sharing, and privacy protection through a research cohort of volunteers who share genetic data, biological samples, and diet and lifestyle information, connected through health IT” (Federal, 2020). Allowing access to public health information will benefit research and solidify knowledge that can lead to innovation. This could improve research into lifestyles topic that are difficult to collect data in, such as obesity. Work in this field is difficult because research here “involves at least some of the following: money, limitations of the freedom of businesses to engage in certain types of commerce, limitations on personal freedom, and opportunity cost” (Richardson, Williams, Fontaine, & Allison, 2017). It is no surprise that obesity is a difficult topic to research. However, if it was possible for individuals to voluntarily shared data on diet and lifestyle to researchers, then this topic could receive attention.

The last goal, to enhance the nation's health infrastructure, is supported by the objective to finalize and implement the nationwide interoperability roadmap. The strategy to success is to

“[f]oster a supportive business, clinical, cultural, and regulatory environment that encourages interoperability” (Federal, 2020). One example of the importance of providers being able to access health information is for immunization records. “[T]he scattering of immunization records among multiple providers; an immunization schedule that has become increasingly complex...and providers into a sense of complacency” (Shortliffe & Cimino, 2014). There was a need for providers to be able to access health data from other care facilities in order to promote the health of the children.

The Health IT Policy Committee and Standards Committee are working hard to pass these objectives. The most recent activity for the Policy Committee approved a report on challenges and barriers to interoperability to Congress. The recommendation included: implement meaningful measure of HIE-sensitive outcomes, develop vendor performance measures, set HIE-sensitive payment incentives, and convene a summit to accelerate pace of interoperability (Health IT Policy, 2020). The Standards Committee recently submitted “recommendations to the National Coordinator for Health IT on standards, implementation specifications, and certification criteria for the electronic exchange and use of health information” (Health IT Standards, 2020). This deliverable focused on the report from the Health IT Policy Committee. It is exciting to see that so much progress is occurring to implement the four goals of the Federal Health IT strategic plan.

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Student #2

Wednesday Discussion

Modernizing and redesigning the U.S. health and wellness information, communications, and technology infrastructure is vital for advancing the health and well-being of individuals and communities across the nation. The four goals of the Federal Health IT strategic plan are:

1. Advance person-Centered and self-managed Health
2. Transform Health care Delivery and community health
3. Foster Research, Scientific Knowledge and innovation
4. Enhance Nation's Health IT Infrastructure (Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.,2020)

Advance person-Centered and self-managed health

The main two objectives of this plan are to Empower individuals, family and the caregiver health management and engagement along with Foster individual, provider and community partnerships. Some of the health policies and standardization needed to be in place to make this happen with the top strategy as to develop and disseminate tools and educational resources for individuals that are designed to help them understand their health information, costs, and care options, and become advocates for their own health(Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.,2020). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed an app that can help users improve their health literacy called as the Health IQ. This is a trivia-based tool that can help individuals learn more about important health topics (Health IQ.,2014).

Transform Health care Delivery and community health

The main three goals under this strategy are to Improve health care quality, access, and experience through safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and person-centered care supporting the delivery of high-value health care and Protect and promote public health and healthy, resilient communities (Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.,2020). This can be achieved by Promoting data collection, clinical decision support, and analytic capabilities that help lead to precision medicine along with expand the capacity of the clinical, community supports, and analytic workforce to use health IT and data analytics (Richardson et al.,2017).

Foster Research, Scientific Knowledge and innovation

The three objectives associated with this strategy are to increase access to and usability of high-quality electronic health information and services, Accelerate the development and commercialization of innovative technologies and solutions and Invest in, disseminate, and translate research on how health IT can improve health and care delivery (Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.,2020). This could be promoted by many ways including but is not limited to: Collaborate with researchers, innovators, and users on strategic dataset releases. Encourage innovative solutions that simplify individual, family, and caregiver access and use of their comprehensive health information from disparate sources and also the most important is to Promote, fund, and disseminate health services research and organizational learning that assesses the impact of health IT use (Esmaeilzadeh et al.,2016).

Enhance Nation's Health IT Infrastructure

The main concern here is to protect the privacy and security of electronic health information by addressing cybersecurity risks in developing technologies and their use. There should be an increased use of common standards among federal agencies, private industry, and the biomedical research community along with improving the capability of health IT to securely manage information from varied sources in both structured and unstructured formats. There should be collaborations with industry and other public stakeholders to promote the ability of consumers to fully access broadband-enabled health resources when and where needed (Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.,2020).

The Health IT Policy Committee made recommendations to the National Coordinator for Health IT on a policy framework for the development and adoption of a nationwide health information infrastructure, including standards for the exchange of patient medical information (Health IT Policy Committee.,2020). This Plan aims to remain flexible to evolving definitions of health, health care, and the technology developments that support them (Shortlife et al.,2014).

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Student responding to student #2s post

I also found interest in the first goal, Advance Person-Centered and Self-Managed Health (Federal, 2020). As a nurse I do patient education on a weekly basis and understand how important it is for individuals to be involved in their care. I enjoyed reading about the tool and educational resource you mentioned, Health IQ. A fun quizzing tool would be a good way to introduce and check competency of health information. I look forward to when cost and care options are common knowledge and individuals can be their own best advocate.

Federal Health IT Strategic Plan. (2020). *Health IT Strategic Planning*. HealthIT.gov. https://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/9-5-federalhealthitstratplanfinal_0.pdf

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Student #3

Wednesday Discussion

The Federal Health IT Strategic Plan focuses on improving the nation's health IT infrastructure with hopes that this will advance the nation's quality of healthcare, personal care, and research. The Plan has four goals. The first is to increase person-centered care in health facilities and self-care at home. The second is to improve the quality and delivery of healthcare and community health. The third is to increase research and innovative techniques for improving care. The fourth is to improve the current health IT infrastructure with greater security, standards, and safety (The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information

Technology [ONC], Office of the Secretary, United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

The creation and implementation of new policies can be challenging. Often, this process involves costs, limitations of freedom for commerce, and ample time and attention (Richardson, Williams, Fontaine, & Allison, 2017). It also requires specific knowledge of the populations using multiple cases and data sets (Shortliffe & Cimino, 2014). To achieve the goals listed above, it is first important to create policy that focuses on value. This indicates solutions centered around safe, affordable, equal, efficient, and accessible care. Next, policies need be person-centered by prioritizing patients, caregivers, providers and researchers in their abilities to achieve privacy and secure trust. Policies that promote educational options such as apps and tools will help the population achieve health and wellness on their own (ONC et al., n.d.). Additional policies should also emphasize techniques for sharing clinical data with patients so that patients can stay up to date with their health information and therefore become more engaged in their own care (Esmaeilzadeh & Sambasivan, 2016).

The Health IT Policy Committee and Health IT Standards Committee play a part in achieving these goals. The Policy Committee is currently working to promote the use of electronic health exchange by addressing challenges that surround interoperability. Specifically, they believe that since most of our nation's health information is contained in EHRs, it is important to improve interoperability to improve coordination of care, population health, and personal access to health information. In the past, they have made recommendations for universal EHR standards, improved incentives, and privacy and security changes. Now, they are working to break down barriers surrounding the financial and business side of healthcare to increase the strength of incentives and directly measure performance (The Health Information Technology Policy Committee, 2015)

The Health IT Standards Committee also play a role in the quest for achieving greater interoperability. Specifically, for the Precision Medicine Initiative (PMI) implementation, they suggested the following three pathways to improve integration. The first was to be able to capture data that exists within the EHR to perform quick data collection on items such as lab results or medications. The second was to promote and enable gathering of data from non-hospital sources such as insurers and retail pharmacies. The third was to increase the ability to receive back a person's aggregated data and use the results to promote patient self-engagement (Gallagher & Malec, 2016). These suggestions aim to increase interoperability within PMI but can be used more broadly in multiple types of health exchanges.

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Student #4

Public health is the government's task to assess the situation, develop policies, and assure that the requirements to achieve these policies are available (Shortliffe & Cimino, 2014, p. 504). The Federal Health IT is the government's section responsible to do these tasks in healthcare information technology. This is comparable to addressing obesity which is a rapidly growing disease affecting the population health and requiring public health interventions (Richardson et al., 2017, p. 840).

1. What are the 4 goals of the Federal Health IT strategic plan?

Based on navigating the official websites for the national coordinator for health information technology and the U.S. Department of health & human services, I reviewed the main scopes for their strategic planning and summarized them here (HealthIT.gov, 2020; HHS.gov, 2020).

- Improving clinical care through effective IT implementation in healthcare

- Recognizing the importance of interoperability in healthcare and supporting initiatives to advance it
- Ensuring that patients have electronic access to their healthcare records which increases their engagement, facilitates communication, and leads to better outcomes.
- Maintaining privacy and security

2. What health policies and standardization need to be in place to make it happen?

There were several initiatives implemented by Federal Health IT to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

- To improve clinical care through effective IT implementation in healthcare:
 1. Improving the electronic database run by the state to monitor restricted medications. It's state-wide and available to the prescribing providers to ensure no drug misuse, abuse, or diversion.
 2. Providing grants to support and promote telehealth
 3. Supporting the development of technologies to facilitate the capture of patient-generated health data. A promising tool to increase patient engagement, quality of care, and research.
- Recognizing the importance of interoperability in healthcare and supporting initiatives to advance it. Awareness of the available services and benefits is critical for a successful assimilation of healthcare information exchange (Esmaeilzadeh & Sambasivan, 2016, p. 82). Some several standards and policies have to be implemented/ensured to facilitate its functionality:
 1. Secure network infrastructure
 2. Verifiable identity and authentication of all participants
 3. Consistent representation of authorization to access electronic health information
 1. Consistent data semantics and formats
 2. Accurate individual data matching
- Ensuring that patients have electronic access to their healthcare records which increases their engagement, facilitates communication, and leads to better outcomes:
 1. Encourage the use of the 'blue button' to empower the patients in accessing and keeping their records, this facilitates patient-centered healthcare.
 2. Maintain the security and privacy over the web portal, apps on the smartphones, and 3rd party phone applications
 3. Continue to offer incentives to the healthcare facilities to initiate and maintain electronic portals for their patients to share their healthcare data
- Maintenance of privacy and security:
 1. Enforce the HIPAA regulation
 2. Educate the patients about their privacy rights and help them file complaints in case of a privacy violation
 3. Provide resources and tools for practices to promote and ensure security maintenance

3. What are the most recent activities from the Health IT Policy Committee and the Health IT Standards Committee?
- Releasing draft 2 of the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA) which outlines a common set of principles, terms, and conditions to support the development of a Common Agreement that would help enable a nationwide exchange of electronic health information (EHI) across disparate health information networks (HINs) ” based on more than 100 comments.
 - Releasing a summary of public comments on “Strategy on Reducing Regulatory and Administrative Burden Relating to the Use of Health IT and EHRs” based on a total of 208 comments.
 - Issuing a proposed rule to support seamless and secure access to, exchange of, and use of electronic health information (EHI).

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My response

1. What are the four goals of the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan?

The strategic plan comprises up to four distinct goals, which serve as a framework for achieving each of the specific and general objectives of the United States (U.S.) healthcare sector (Health IT, 2020). The first goal involves advancing person-centered, as well as self-managed health. The second goal is to transform both the delivery of health care and community health. The third goal of the strategic plan revolves around fostering innovation, research, and scientific knowledge. The fourth and final goal involves enhancing the health IT infrastructure of the nation. In particular, goals one and two seek to fulfill the objectives of empowering health care consumers and caregivers and improving the quality and access of care, respectively. Likewise, the third and fourth goals serve as a guide to increasing the usability of advanced or high-quality electronic health services and associated and protecting people's privacy and security of any forms of electronic health information, respectively.

2. What health policies and standardization need to be in place to make it happen?

One of the policies necessary for accomplishing the four goals of the strategic plan includes governance, as well as interoperability of the exchange of health information. In essence, ONC works with all the responsible stakeholders, including service providers, to ensure health information follows patients, regardless of location and time. Another policy involves care transformation, with the ONC providing the much-needed strategic, in addition to expertise direction needed by players to transform and optimize health care through the use of IT (ONC, 2018). Moreover, privacy and security remain a central policy as ONC prioritizes the development of patient trust when it comes to the use of health data because this is a prerequisite for interoperability.

Besides the policies briefly described above, the HHS enforces a variety of laws or acts, such as the HIPAA, ACA, and HITECH Act, which, in turn, form the basis for the standardization of health IT. For instance, through HIPAA, the HHS has established national standards that govern electronic care transactions (Health IT, 2019). Some of the standardizations enforced under the HIPAA Administrative Simplification Rules (HASRs) include the National Provider Identifier Standard, Transactions and Code Set Standards, as well as the Employer Identifier Standard.

3. What are the most recent activities from the Health IT Policy Committee and the Health IT Standards Committee?

Currently, there is no planned or active workgroup in the Health IT Policy Committee. Most importantly, the December 16, 2015 meeting saw the committee approve “Challenges and Barriers to Interoperability Report.” The Health IT Standards Committee places a great deal of emphasis on the various recommendations developed and presented by the HITSC. Regarding the most recent undertaking, the committee does not have any active workgroups. However, on February 7, 2017, the committee convened a meeting that resulted in the approval of Phase II recommendations developed by the Interoperability Standards Advisory Task Force. These recommendations were desired to update and improve the ISA.

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