Doctors And Hospitals' Use Of Health IT More Than Doubles Since 2012

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced that more than half of all doctors and other eligible providers have received Medicare or Medicaid incentive payments for adopting or meaningfully using electronic health records (EHRs).

HHS has met and exceeded its goal for 50 percent of doctor offices and 80 percent of eligible hospitals to have EHRs by the end of 2013.

Adoption of Electronic Health Records by Physicians and Other Providers - Click for larger graphSince the Obama administration started encouraging providers to adopt EHRs, usage has increased dramatically. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey in 2012, the percent of physicians using an advanced EHR system was just 17 percent in 2008. Today, more than 50 percent of eligible professionals (mostly physicians) have demonstrated meaningful use and received an incentive payment. For hospitals, just nine percent had adopted EHRs in 2008, but today, more than 80 percent have demonstrated meaningful use of EHRs.

"We have reached a tipping point in adoption of electronic health records," said Secretary Sebelius. "More than half of eligible professionals and 80 percent of eligible hospitals have adopted these systems, which are critical to modernizing our health care system. Health IT helps providers better coordinate care, which can improve patients' health and save money at the same time."

Adoption of Electronic Health Records by Eligible Hospitals - Click for larger graphThe Obama administration has encouraged the adoption of health IT starting with the passage of the Recovery Act in 2009 because it is an integral element of health care quality and efficiency improvements. Doctors, hospitals, and other eligible providers that adopt and meaningfully use certified electronic health records receive incentive payments through the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs. Part of the Recovery Act, these programs began in 2011 and are administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology.

Adoption of EHRs is also critical to the broader health care improvement efforts that have started as a result of the Affordable Care Act. These efforts – improving care coordination, reducing duplicative tests and procedures, and rewarding hospitals for keeping patients healthier – all made possible by widespread use of EHRs. Health IT systems give doctors, hospitals, and other providers the ability to better coordinate care and reduce errors and readmissions that can cost more money and leave patients less healthy. In turn, efforts to improve care coordination and efficiency create further incentive for providers to adopt health IT.

As of the end of April 2013:

More than 291,000 eligible professionals and over 3,800 eligible hospitals have received incentive payments from the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs.

Approximately 80 percent of all eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals in the U.S. have received an incentive payment for adopting, implementing, upgrading, or meaningfully using an EHR.

More than half of physicians and other eligible professionals in the U.S. have received an incentive payment for adopting, implementing, upgrading, or meaningfully using an EHR.

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