

May 31, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The use of electronic medical records presents enormous benefits to us all. And that's just the beginning of the story, as I detailed in the *Straight Talk* issue of May 3rd.

Helen Thompson, a Fellow in the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, is directing NCH's efforts forward from where our recently retired CIO Susan Wolff has brought us. NCH is among the top 200 hospitals in the nation for the utilization of computer technology in healthcare. This is due in large part to our partnership with Cerner, the largest international healthcare computer company in the world.

To summarize advantages of electronic medical records in an "elevator speech," consider the following:

Availability in Emergencies

If you are in an accident and unable to explain your medical history to healthcare providers, they can find the information about your medications, health issues, and tests and make quicker, better informed decisions about your emergency care.

Protection amid Disasters

If you are in an area affected by a disaster, like Hurricane Katrina, your health information can be stored safely in electronic form.

Improved Care/Reduced Medical Errors

Access to information about care you receive elsewhere gives your healthcare providers a better, more complete picture of your health. That means your healthcare providers can make sure the care they provide doesn't interact badly with other treatment you may be receiving. For example, when you can't remember what medications you are taking, health information exchange, a part of electronic medical records, can make information about your conditions and medications available to your healthcare providers so that they will know the correct care to administer rather than doing something that might be harmful.

Tracking for Protection

When your health information is shared electronically, information about accessing your record is stored electronically. This can include the identity of those who accessed your record, the date of access, the types of information accessed, and the reason your record was accessed. As a result, it is easier to enforce laws and regulations governing access of electronic records than paper records.

Increased Safety/Reduced Duplication and Inefficiency

Because with electronic medical records healthcare providers can see what tests you've had, including results, these tests don't have to be repeated as often. Especially with x-rays and certain lab tests, this means you are at less risk from radiation and other side effects. It also means that you may pay less for your healthcare in copayments and deductibles.

Nothing is as constant as change, and our community is changing and improving faster than ever before as we embrace the digital age.

Respectfully,

Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share Straight Talk and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.