What "Meaningful Use" Means for College Health

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Ask a private practice provider about "Meaningful Use" and the answer is likely to include a few colorful adjectives. And we've heard college health providers express relief that their participation is not required because their student health center does not bill Medicare or Medicaid.

However, the underlying visions of Meaningful Use and College Health are tightly aligned in support of Wellness. This paper describes what Meaningful Use is and makes a case that the College Health community should enthusiastically embrace a leadership role in its adoption within the rapidly evolving national healthcare policy landscape.

A (Very) Brief History of Meaningful Use.

Meaningful Use did not originate with the Affordable Care Act (March 2010) as many might assume. It rose out of the chaos of the Great Recession, specifically the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of February 2009. The ARRA/HITECH Act[1] included financial incentives to qualified providers to modernize the nation's infrastructure by encouraging adoption and the "meaningful use" of electronic health records throughout the US healthcare system.

The goal of Meaningful Use is to take advantage of EHR technology to support quality patient care, improve communications and clinical workflow, increase security, and reduce stress. Through a mix of financial incentives, including Medicare and Medicaid payment penalties, the federal government is attempting to motivate a significant number of providers toward its goal of achieving an "interoperable health information technology ecosystem [that] makes the right data available to the right people at the right time."[2]

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[1] http://www.cdc.gov/ehrmeaningfuluse/introduction.html
[2] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/nationwide-interoperability-roadmap-draft-version-1.0.pdf

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Meaningful Use is using certified EHR technology in a meaningful manner…that provides for the electronic exchange of health information to improve the quality of care."[3] The concept of meaningful use rests on the "five pillars" of health outcomes policy priorities, namely:

1) Improve quality, safety, efficiency, and reduce health disparities;

2) Engage patients and families in their health;

3) Improve care coordination;

4) Improve population and public health; and

5) Ensure adequate privacy and security protection for personal health information."[4]

Meaningful Use goals align with the mission of College Health.

The following synthesis of common themes in College Health mission statements from across the country finds parallels to Meaningful Use objectives:

1) Deliver accessible, quality, healthcare and health information with fiscal responsibility and equitable use of resources.

2) Influence students' health attitudes and practices and educate future healthcare consumers to be informed and engaged participants in their own healthcare;

3) Provide communication between providers and between patients and providers;

4) Respect and affirm individual patient differences and cultural diversity; and

5) Serve as active leaders in the collegiate and community healthcare system.

This alignment of Meaningful Use goals and College Health missions reveals an opportunity for College Health to directly effect change and lead the way toward a successful national health information ecosystem. Even if individual providers are not convinced of its merit, here is the new reality: Meaningful Use is now setting the national standard for certified EHR technology development and its use.

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[3] http://www.cdc.gov/ehrmeaningfuluse/introduction.html

[4] ibid.

Why is Meaningful Use negatively perceived in the private sector?

First, private sector providers are correct to feel that the government is forcing their hand – ready or not. "In order to encourage widespread EHR adoption, promote innovation and to avoid imposing excessive burden on healthcare providers, Meaningful Use was showcased as a phased approach divided into three stages."[5] In Stage 1, incentives were paid to subsidize providers who voluntarily purchased federally certified EHRs (if they served a minimum threshold of Medicare/Medicaid patients). However, for eligible providers failing to meet Meaningful Use Stage 2 standards during 2015, there will be negative adjustments (penalties) to their Medicare/Medicaid fees.[6]

Second, with the federal government "paying for" EHR systems in Stage 1, the past six years has seen a great rush of EHR adoption. Rather than educate clinics on the merits of their EHR with respect to workflow, patient safety and outcomes, vendors led their sales pitch with how their system was sure to qualify for the government reimbursement. And providers eagerly accepted the checks.

As a result, there were a lot of inadequately designed EHR systems sold with very poor and ineffective implementations. The federal government is now citing EHR adoption rates over 70%, but the reality is that the proportion of clinics who have truly effective EHR implementations is still relatively low. This has caused frustration, impeded progress, and resulted in early and persistent negative opinions about EHR by the same providers Meaningful Use was trying to motivate.

Does Meaningful Use matter to College Health?

Because student health and counseling centers rarely serve and bill Medicare and Medicaid patients, they were not eligible for the initial EHR purchase subsidy and have no need to fear penalties. Even so, we believe that Meaningful Use is vital to the future of College Health. "In June 2014, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) laid

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[5] ibid.

[6] http://www.cdc.gov/ehrmeaningfuluse/introduction.html

out a vision for a future health IT ecosystem where electronic health information is appropriately and readily available to empower consumers, support clinical decision-making, inform population and public health and value based payment, and advance science."[7]

The recently released Interoperability Roadmap from the ONC (January 2015) provides a detailed plan to advance toward the goals of interoperability by promoting, facilitating, and enhancing safe and secure exchange and use of health information nationwide. The result: empowered providers and patients with improved patient care and population health.[8]

Meaningful Use has been gradually phased in as promised. **Stage 1**, introduced 2011-2012, addressed the expansion of EHR adoption for data capture and sharing.[9] **Stage 2** rolled out in 2014 to advance secure health information exchange, clinical processes and patient engagement.[10] The final phase, **Stage 3** is set for 2017 with the goals of strengthening healthcare delivery, improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities, and advancing scientific knowledge and innovation.[11]

Short-term Relevance and Long-term Implications to College Health.

According to the Nationwide Interoperability Roadmap, "the health IT community must expand its focus beyond institutional care delivery and health care providers, to a broad view of person-centered health."[12] College Health's natural student-focused approach has been recognized and its potential is being acknowledged: "Most determinants of health status are social and are influenced by actions and encounters that occur outside traditional institutional health care delivery settings, such as in employment, retail, education and other settings."[13]

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[7] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/ONC10yearInteroperabilityConceptPaper.pdf
[8] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/nationwide-interoperability-roadmap-draft-version-1.0.pdf
[9] https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/downloads/EP-MU-TOC.pdf
[10] https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/Stage2_MeaningfulUseSpecSheet_TableContents_EPs.pdf
[11] ibid.
[12] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/nationwide-interoperability-roadmap-draft-version-1.0.pdf
[13] ibid.

This expansion "requires a high degree of information sharing between individuals, providers and organizations and therefore a high degree of interoperability between many different types of health IT, such that systems can exchange and use electronic health information without special effort on the part of the user."[14]

Within the context of the Interoperability Roadmap, Meaningful Use is about much more than incentives and penalties for Medicare and Medicaid providers. <u>Meaningful Use is about the empowerment of Providers, Patients, and Community</u>, and all three types of empowerment are essential in meeting College Health goals of improving wellness in patient-centered environments.

<u>How does Meaningful Use empower College Health Providers?[15]</u>

Interoperability and meaningful use of EHR improves communication and overcomes *islands of information*:

- Through secure and DIRECT messaging, patient health information can be exchanged between providers to improve care coordination.
- With data portability, providers can capture, import, and export Continuity of Care Documents (CCD) and Clinical Quality Measures (CQM).
- Prescriptions of controlled and uncontrolled substances are made electronically with allergies and current medication interactions automatically noted.
- Patient problem lists are linked to preventative alerts.
- Providers have secure access to imaging and lab results.
- Comprehensive and consistent reporting supports outcomes-based treatments.

Together, these advanced capabilities transform EHR into a highly effective and efficient system that empowers providers to meet College Health missions. By actively embracing Meaningful Use, College Health can play a prominent role in the advancement of the national healthcare

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[14] ibid.
[15] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/2014editionehrcertificationcriteria_mustage2.pdf

delivery system and set the pace for informing protocols and improving outcomes while efficiently using resources.

How does Meaningful Use empower Students?[16]

Students arrive on campus knowing that technology is part of life. For them, it is not a wave of the future; it is today, it is everywhere, and it provides access to everything. Unfortunately, that is typically not the case with their medical information. Student health centers embracing Meaningful Use empower their students with secure health information technology:

- Students coming from pediatric offices compliant with Meaningful Use can bring their electronic charts *with* them.
- As patients, students, with their providers, will have access to patient-specific education resources pertinent to problems, medications, and labs. Together, they can access and review demographics and patient family health history to inform immediate care.
- Within a Patient Portal, patients can communicate securely and conveniently with their providers, and view, download, and transmit personal health information to third parties via encrypted DIRECT messaging.
- Graduating students can easily take their medical information to the next stage of their lives.

Embracing Meaningful Use furthers the College Health professional's role as Educator, demonstrating to students as new healthcare consumers the importance of engagement in their own healthcare and how to securely access and manage personal health information.

How does Meaningful Use empower the College Health Community?[17]

Use of data aggregation reveals the power of structured and accessible data and empowers not just patient health management, but population wellness. This ultimately strengthens healthcare delivery and improves the health and well-being of the community while advancing

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[16] http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/2014editionehrcertificationcriteria_mustage2.pdf

[17] ibid.

scientific knowledge and innovation. In contrast to the private sector, College Health is a naturally collaborative and non-competitive environment - ideal for the adoption of this vision.

Conclusion

Embracing Meaningful Use is not an option. It is where healthcare is, and should be, headed in the interest of patient care, safety and outcomes. Because the goals of Meaningful Use align so closely with the missions of College Health, this industry could be a national role model in embracing the value of Meaningful Use technology, not from fear of financial penalties, but for the right reasons – Student Wellness!

Medicat's role in supporting Meaningful Use

Medicat empowers providers, patients, and the college health community by offering an EHR certified to the most current federal standard available (ONC HIT 2014 Edition Complete EHR certification, also known as "Meaningful Use Stage 2" certification). Medicat is committed to providing the best product, superb implementation, and unsurpassed support while maintaining its leadership in technology innovation, product development, and industry best practices.

Additional Resources

2014 Edition EHR Certification Criteria Grid Mapped to Meaningful Use Stage 2 - http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/2014editionehrcertificationcriteria_mustage2.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Meaningful Use Introduction - http://www.cdc.gov/ehrmeaningfuluse/introduction.html

eHealth Programs Interactive Timeline - http://cms.gov/apps/interactive-timeline/

Meaningful Use Core and Menu Set Objectives Stage 1 - https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/downloads/EP-MU-TOC.pdf

Meaningful Use Core and Menu Set Objectives Stage 2 - https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/Stage2_MeaningfulUseSpecSheet_TableContents_EPs.pdf

ONC's 10-Year Interoperability Concept Paper -
http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/ONC10yearInteroperabilityConceptPaper.pdf

National Interoperability Roadmap - http://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/nationwide-interoperability-roadmap-draft-version-1.0.pdf