

Health Information Technology Benefits for Consumers

The Wyoming Health Information Organization ("WyHIO"), pronounced wy-o´, is an organization committed to the advancement of health information technology statewide in Wyoming and in conjunction with regional and national initiatives. WyHIO will be the Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) to enable the statewide use of health information technology (Health IT). The RHIO will allow health care providers, with your permission, to access your health records so that they can have your total health picture when treating you. Benefits envisioned are safer and less costly health care.

The Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee, Senator Charles K. Scott and Representative Doug Osborn, co-Chairmen, has sponsored a bill, Senate File No. SF0050, Health Care Information Technology, to establish a RHIO and appropriate funding from the general fund. This money would be used for start-up and operating costs of the RHIO that are not funded by other grants. Once fully implemented statewide, the RHIO will be expected to cover its own operating costs without assistance from the state. Go to <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2006/Introduced/SF0050.pdf> for the full bill.

As a computer technologist, a consumer and a patient, I am 100% behind the formation of a Wyoming Regional Health Information Organization and [SF0050](#). Use of Health IT will allow the use of Electronic Health Records (EHRs, which are the electronic storage and access of patient medical records). Access to EHRs will be a great asset for the patient, the physician and the health communities.

Widespread use of health IT is an outgrowth of Patient Safety Concerns. A 1997 study estimated that at least 44,000 Americans die each year as a result of medical errors. Reducing the number of avoidable errors was a driving force behind the nationwide adoption Health IT and EHRs (see "To Err is Human" Linda T. Kohn, Janet M. Corrigan, and Molla S. Donaldson, Editors; Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, IOM).

Security and Privacy: This system will, at a minimum:

- be compliant with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- have procedures to give individuals secure access to their individual records
- have procedures to restrict all unauthorized and inappropriate access to your health records
- have regularly scheduled security audits to ensure security compliance

Health IT is happening and we, the Wyoming consumer, have a great opportunity to participate and **LET OUR VOICE BE HEARD**. With the State's assistance we can assure that the system developed will conform to national standards and allow your health care provider to access your data regardless of where it is located.

The bill needs your support!

- Contact your local representative and Governor Freudenthal and tell them that you are in favor of a state funded RHIO.
- Talk to your health care providers and let them know that you are in favor of them using EHRs to improve your care.
- Give this information to your health care provider and ask them to contact their legislators.

Provided below are:

- Some key points that you can give as reasons that you support this legislation.
- A template for an email to send to your legislator.
- List of state legislators by county with email addresses.

Give me a call (307-399-7148) or email (alarsen@lartech.net) if you have any questions, concerns, need more info or even if you disagree with me. I'd like to be able to convince you that this is a good thing! For more detailed information, visit my website at www.lartech.net or the WYHIO at www.wyhio.com.

Why is Wyoming RHIO a benefit to you?

Safety

- ✓ Improved safety through better access to health information
- ✓ Access to vital medical data in an emergency such as an car accident
- ✓ Extra layer of protection against drugs being prescribed that, when taken together, have adverse effects

Control

- ✓ You will be able to give your records out only when necessary and be able to select which records at that time

Cost

- ✓ You will have the results from that test you took last week and will not have to pay for another one (up to \$500 nationally billion per year is spent on unneeded or duplicative care)⁽¹⁾
- ✓ The new e-Prescribing federal initiative, which supports electronic ordering of medications, is projected to save Americans about \$27 billion annually in medication spending⁽¹⁾

Consumer Access

- ✓ Rural and remote consumers' information is received on time when visiting health care providers in larger towns or cities
- ✓ You have access to your own health record

Convenience

- ✓ Your records will be there when you have an appointment.

Close Family Members

- ✓ The information for chronically ill parent/child/partner will be available when visiting an emergency room or when referred to another specialist
- ✓ You will be able to more easily monitor care for elderly parents who do not live close by

Communication

- ✓ Because you have access to all your health information, you can develop a stronger relationship with your health care providers
- ✓ Because health care providers have faster access to your records, there will be better communication between the different health care providers, which is better for you
- ✓ If you have difficulty recalling relevant health information, providers will already have all this information (even if you have forgotten)
- ✓ You won't have to fill in the same forms with the same information every time you go to a health care provider's office

One Patient's Experience

In 2003, Pat McGinley of Cleveland, Ohio, registered for an on-line program created to help patients monitor their health. She signed up at the request of her physician, but it never crossed her mind that she would actually use it. "I am not a real techie person," she said. "I did it to appease my doctor."

A few weeks later, following routine blood work, the doctor's nurse called to inform her that she had both high cholesterol and high triglyceride levels. Pat was upset at the news and resigned herself to living with her worries and unanswered questions until the follow-up visit in two weeks.

Then something happened that Pat did not expect: She received an e-mail telling her that she should log on to her on-line healthcare program to review new information. She went from being worried to being relieved when the program directed her to comprehensive, easy-to-understand information about her test results and likely condition. She could compare her results with normal levels and click on embedded links for additional material. Pat began to feel more at ease, and at her next appointment she was prepared with important, informed questions for her doctor about her health and what she needed to change.

The system "really empowered me to think about what was going on. It made me feel like I was part of the decision-making process," she told President Bush at a public event at the Cleveland Clinic in January 2005. With the help of an interoperable healthcare system, Pat and her doctor were able to work together to make critical lifestyle changes.

As a patient, Pat understood her medical situation better than she ever had before, and she credits that to her access to private, personalized information delivered electronically. "I went from feeling helpless to feeling completely in control of the situation," she said. ⁽¹⁾

(1) Commission on Systemic Interoperability, "Ending The Document Game Your Healthcare Through Connecting and Transforming Information Technology", U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL EDITION NOTICE, 2005
<http://endingthedocumentgame.gov/>

This is the email that I sent to my representatives, which you can use as a template. Be sure to include your name—your address would be helpful also.

Dear _____:

I am a constituent from your district.

I am voicing my endorsement of SB0050, Health care information technology:

“AN ACT relating to public health and safety; providing for electronic health records; providing for the designation of a regional health information organization; providing for contracting with the regional health information organization for development of a system of electronic health records; providing priorities in system development; providing protections for patient privacy; providing for development of incentives for use of the system; providing appropriations; and providing for an effective date.”

As a consumer, I believe that the availability of electronic health records (EHRs) in the state of Wyoming will ensure that I will receive quality care and that my cost for health care would be reduced. If the state shows leadership in putting money into the system, it would be easier for smaller communities to offer this service to their consumers, and it would assure that the national standards that are being developed under the American Health Information Community would be adhered to.

<<<ADD YOUR OWN STORY HERE IF YOU HAVE ONE— ANOTHER EXAMPLE WOULD BE YOUR ABILITY TO RECEIVE GOOD CARE SHOULD YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENT OR NEED EMERGENCY TREATMENT OUTSIDE OF YOUR PERSONAL AREA IN WYOMING OR THE ENTIRE US

I recently heard from a friend where a family member in a Wyoming nursing home had an infection and the nursing staff gave her an antibiotic to which she was allergic. Luckily they were able to counter the effect of the drug, but she was in critical condition for about a day. With the effective use of EHRs, this would have been more easily avoided; when the nursing staff went to get the antibiotic for this patient, a notice would have appeared flagging this person’s allergies.>>>

While EHRs do not prevent mistakes, they can reduce these mistakes by assisting organizations with their processes. By the use of a computerized record, the logic built into the computer program would flag such items as allergies to medicine, adverse reactions to drugs and other critical patient information and bring them to the forefront for the practitioner to see and thereby reduce medical errors.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Anne Larsen

Listing of State Representatives and Senators, Alphabetical by County—For mailing addresses, go to
<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2005/members/rep.htm>
<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2005/members/sen.htm>

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