

**eHEALTH INITIATIVE AND THE CDC
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE JOSEPH H. KANTER FOUNDATION**

**A PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION TO
IMPROVE THE PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE
AND
THE NATION'S PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO
BIOTERRORISM**

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Overview of the eHealth Initiative-CDC Collaboration

Through a public-private partnership, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the eHealth Initiative (eHI), supported by the Joseph H. Kanter Foundation, are now working on a collaborative effort to bolster the public health infrastructure and improve the nation's preparedness and response to a potential large-scale bioterrorism event. Initial work will focus on leveraging current health care information systems and existing data streams within the health care delivery system, to enhance public health data collection, surveillance, and detection processes.

eHI and CDC will work together with providers and state and local public health agencies to help identify critical public health data needs and develop strategies to rapidly and effectively capture and transmit such including information on specific laboratory and pharmacy transactions, emergency room visits, admissions, symptoms, and diagnoses, using CDC's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS).

This initiative is significant because industry-leading members of eHI (such as Cerner, McKesson, and Siemens) provide health care information systems for 80% of the nation's hospitals.

Depending on the data elements selected, eHI members believe it will take anywhere from three to twelve months to make the necessary changes, once specifications have been identified. In addition, eHI has committed to working closely with providers, the CDC, state and local public health agencies, and other public and private groups to address other critical issues associated with implementation, such as those related to privacy and security--by helping to frame the issues and define the necessary safeguards to address these concerns.

This initiative will not only help the public health infrastructure, it will do so in a way that results in less burden on providers. Because eHI's members provide critical health care information systems to so many of the nation's hospitals, this initiative will result in more coordination and standardization and promote efficiencies that will reduce the amount of burden placed on hospitals.

The eHealth Initiative

The eHealth Initiative and its affiliated organization, the Foundation for the eHealth Initiative are non-profit organizations. The mission of both organizations is to improve the quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of health care through the rapid discovery, development, and adoption of information technology.

The eHealth Initiative is a membership organization comprised of more than 60 leading health care organizations that was created to provide a unified voice for the health care industry on eHealth and technology-related issues. Its members represent many of the stakeholders in the health care industry with interests in improving the health care system through the use of digital technology, including eHealth and technology organizations, health systems, health care providers, pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, service providers, non-profit organizations and trade associations, and research institutions. Cerner Corporation, EDS, Guidant Corporation, HealthStream, the Health Technology Center, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, McKesson Corporation, Medtronic, SAIC, Siemens, and VHA Inc. and key health care providers such as MedStar Health and CareGroup Healthcare System are all eHI members

eHI's members either represent or have a large national base of clients that include most hospitals, providers, and significant portions of the general public, estimated at:

- 5,000 hospitals
- 370,000 practicing physicians
- 11,000 emergency medical personnel
- 30,000,000 web users

The Foundation for the eHealth Initiative, a 501(c)(3) organization, was created to serve as a national forum for the discussion of the policy issues relevant to the application of technology to support health and to articulate and execute a vision of a better health care system enabled by technology, to improve the quality, safety, and cost-effectiveness of care, as well as consumers' experiences with managing their health. The work of the public-private collaboration will take place under the Foundation.

Why is the eHealth Initiative Engaged in this Activity?

The mission of eHI and its Foundation is to drive improvement in the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care through the rapid discovery, development, and adoption of information technology. Implementation of this proposal would not only have a significant impact on the public health infrastructure, it would also serve as a critical step in improving the quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of care across the *entire* health care system.

How Will this Initiative be Funded?

Seed funding for the initial work will be provided through a grant from the Joseph H. Kanter Foundation. The President of the Joseph H. Kanter Foundation, Joseph H. Kanter, is a businessman and a philanthropist who believes in the power of a public-private partnership. He is accustomed to uniting the both the public and private sectors to drive

change and address the nation's challenges, as demonstrated by his work with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality on a national outcomes database, which is designed to support better patient decision-making based on evidence. This seed funding will be supplemented by funds received from both the private sector and the government.

What is the Joseph H. Kanter Foundation?

The Joseph H. Kanter Foundation is affiliated with the Kanter Family Foundation, an organization which acts as a catalyst and broker to encourage others to undertake outcomes research projects, and promotes efforts to foster public understanding that better treatment outcomes data will improve quality of care by reducing unnecessary treatments and medical errors.

To help patients and health care providers make better-informed decisions about how to tackle illnesses, the Kanter Family Foundation seeks to create an easily accessible, statistically reliable National Health Outcomes Database. This comprehensive and confidential database of patients' treatment experiences would help determine which treatments work best for specific diseases and conditions. The database would foster constructive communication between patients and health care providers.

To pursue its objectives, the Kanter Family Foundation co-founded a unique government-private venture, the Health Legacy Partnership (HELP), with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Kanter launched the database project to address a glaring need in modern medicine: better information on treatment outcomes. Kanter's vision is to inform patients that they can improve their quality of life and health care by fostering relationships with their doctors to utilize evidence-based medicine and health outcomes research" - the study of "what really works" in treating illnesses.

What is Unique About this Initiative?

First of all, this initiative is unique because it is a public-private collaboration, which leverages the skills and expertise of both our nation's public health agencies and the private sector—an unprecedented and extraordinary combination that will result in significant gains for the public health system and all Americans.

Second, this initiative is unique because it calls for *building upon* existing health care information systems and data streams within America's hospitals (vs. creating something new). This is critical, because our hospitals and physicians are currently facing a multitude of healthcare issues. Coordinating efforts among public health agencies and the leading health care IT developers will help our nation's providers play their critical role in surveillance and detection by reducing the burden on an already challenged system. By augmenting existing systems, surveillance efforts can occur "in the background" and reduce the need for "double-entry" by our nation's busy physicians and healthcare professionals.

Industry-leading members of eHI involved in this initiative, including Cerner, McKesson, and Siemens, provide health care information systems for 80% of the nation's hospitals. By working together, they can effectively impact a large portion of our nation's health care information infrastructure.

Finally, this represents a critical first step towards greater standardization and interoperability. The power of combining a national need for interoperable systems with standardized data through CDC's NEDSS, with the vision of Joseph H. Kanter, and with the expertise and leadership of the health care IT developers who provide software applications for 80% of the nation's hospitals is extraordinary and may provide the catalyst that is needed to drive greater interoperability—a critical barrier to a national health information infrastructure which is greatly needed to drive greater quality of care.

Scope of Work

Initial work will focus on leveraging current health care information technology systems and existing data streams within the health care delivery system, to enhance public health data collection, surveillance, and detection processes. The initial scope of work, as outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding between the CDC and eHI is summarized as follows:

- Explore utility of data currently in electronic format for bioterrorism detection and public health response.
 - ✓ CDC will identify selected data potentially useful to detect a bioterrorism event, which represent a range of data categories, such as data from emergency rooms, laboratories, pharmacies, and administrative data.
 - ✓ eHI will evaluate the high-level feasibility of and methods for rapidly capturing and transmitting specified data from hospitals.
 - ✓ CDC and eHI will conduct exploratory analyses to evaluate utility of data (e.g. geographic coverage, timeliness, baseline variability)
- Collaborate on developing an approach to providing access to expanded data of public health importance.
 - ✓ CDC and eHI will develop a process to involve public health partners to identify a more comprehensive set of data potentially useful to detect events of public health importance.

- ✓ eHI will work closely with providers, the CDC, state and local public health agencies, and other public and private groups to address other critical issues associated with implementation, such as those related to privacy and security--by helping to frame the issues and define the necessary safeguards to address these concerns.
- ✓ CDC and eHI will collaboratively develop strategies to assist in the rapid capture and transmission of data specified by the CDC and its public health partners from selected hospitals upon such hospitals' authorization, to state and local health departments, using the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), which is designed to electronically facilitate the collection, management, transmission, analysis and dissemination of surveillance data.

Who Will Be Involved?

eHI and the CDC, supported by the Joseph H. Kanter Foundation, will work with providers and state and public health agencies to help identify critical public health data needs and develop strategies to rapidly and effectively capture and transmit such data, including information on specific laboratory and pharmacy transactions, emergency room visits, admissions, symptoms, and diagnoses, using CDC's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS). eHI anticipates that key stakeholders in the initiative will include:

- Public health-related organizations such as the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the Association of Public Health Laboratories, and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.
- Hospitals and health Systems
- Physicians, including general practitioners and emergency physicians
- Privacy organizations
- Health care information standards organizations
- Other governmental agencies.

What is Needed to Make this Happen?

First of all, two major steps have already been taken. First, the eHealth Initiative member companies have come together and have agreed to collaborate on this endeavor to support the CDC. Second, the CDC and eHI have also agreed to collaborate on this endeavor, with input from state and local public health agencies and other key constituencies.

Appropriate funding for the CDC and the state and local public health agencies will be required. The CDC's NEDSS system will need to handle significant increases in incoming data and analytical tools to utilize that data. It is imperative that funding for CDC and state and local public health agencies cover that which is needed for an *integrated* information system—one which addresses both the Health Alert Network and

NEDSS, as well as any other infrastructure required to support prevention, detection, and response.

Hospitals will also likely have additional costs, however, we believe that by building upon the existing infrastructure and using existing information technology systems and data streams, costs and time/effort on the part of the nation's hospitals will be minimized. Furthermore, changes that will result from this initiative will help to move the "interoperability" agenda forward—a critical barrier to greater digitization of our health care system—which is required to improve both the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care delivery.

Finally, leadership and coordination amongst the federal, state and local governmental agencies, such as CDC, state and local public health agencies, CMS, and other agencies, with significant input from the private sector, is critical for moving forward effectively.

Key Imperatives

To be successful this initiative must address the following key factors:

- Maintain a focus on both the larger public health and health care system benefits that can result from this effort.
- Engage the provider community.
- Engage public health at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Utilize a public/private partnership that leverages unique capabilities.
- Demonstrate rapid, concrete and significant results while moving towards longer-term goals.
- Demonstrate feasibility through demonstration projects at the state and/or local levels.

Other Public-Private Sector Initiatives Related to Public Health

eHI members are also exploring other opportunities to improve the nation's preparedness and response through public-private sector collaboration, by leveraging current private sector health information systems and processes which focus on:

- Communicating with health care practitioners in their offices and at the point of care;
- Making the latest guidelines for detection and treatment directly available to a wider health care provider audience;
- Supporting provider follow-up and communication with patients; and
- Expanding efforts to educate the general public with uniform recommendations about prevention, symptom recognition, early detection, and treatment of bioterror-related illnesses.

How Does This Initiative Benefit the Overall Health Care System?

Changes brought about by the public-private sector partnership will result in improvements across the nation's health care system. Not only will these actions enhance the public health infrastructure, they will also serve as a critical step in

significantly improving the quality, safety, and cost-effectiveness of health care throughout the *entire* health care system.”

The health care systems faces many challenges today, including those related to quality of care, medical errors, rising medical costs, and a looming health care crisis. With the expansion of digital technology within health care, we as a nation, can begin to address many of these challenges.