



HIT Perspectives

Perspectives and Updates on Health Information Technology



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Health Information Exchange

HIEs: Back From the Dead?

By Ed Daniels

There's been a lot of buzz lately about the importance of health information exchanges (HIEs) and concerns about their sustainability. At a recent industry meeting, for example, one cynic characterized HIEs as "dead men walking."

However, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the demise of HIEs may be greatly exaggerated. According to a recent survey by the eHealth Initiative, the past year has seen a net growth of 9% in the number of HIEs, which now total 255. Twenty-four HIEs reported having sustainable business models, up from 18 in 2010.

With funding from the National eHealth Collaborative, Point-of-Care Partners (POCP) recently conducted an in-depth profile of 12 successful HIEs: Availity, Big Bend RHIO, Health Bridge, HealthInfoNet, Inland Northwest Health Services, Med Virginia, Quality Health Network, Rochester RHIO, Sandlot, SMRTNET, THINC, and the US Department of Veterans Affairs.¹ While these and other successful HIEs are alive and well, another group of HIEs are on the edge or having trouble getting started. Some of these efforts will die but there will be survivors, with some are destined to become significant players on the health information technology landscape.

What makes certain HIEs thrive? Through innovative strategies and business models, successful HIEs can benefit multiple stakeholder groups and, in the process, grow and become self-sustaining. Among critical success factors: embracing an intensive and ongoing effort to align stakeholders with HIE priorities.

POCP believes payers are a key stakeholder group for HIEs. So far, however, we have observed that, with a few significant exceptions, payers have failed to understand how their interests align with HIEs. For one thing, payers may have the misperception that HIEs are on their way to extinction. Another reason for failing to engage is that payers are used to having the upper hand with stakeholders at whatever point they choose to engage. This might not be the case with HIEs because as they get bigger, stronger and more financially sound, they will realize a much stronger negotiating position. As a result, payers will find themselves being more reactive. To quote from page 3 the report, "...a common view of the HIE organizations...is that the longer payers...stay on the sidelines, the less leverage they will have when they finally realize the significant value of the health information available from the HIEs..."

POCP is proud to have played key roles in a number of multi-stakeholder health care initiatives. From building HIE strategies and advising on execution to serving in a managerial role, we provide a broad range of HIE consulting services. Give us a call or drop us an e-mail for more information about how POCP can provide the guidance and experience necessary to steer your multi-stakeholder initiative toward success.

¹ You can access the report at <http://nationalehealth.org/SecretsofHIESuccessRevealed.pdf>.

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