



Health IT issues for 2016



In his article appearing in *MedCity News*, Dr. John D. Halamka, chief information officer and dean for technology at Harvard Medical School, discusses key issues in health IT that will shape strategic planning for FY16.

Documentation requirements. Current demands of Meaningful Use, hundreds of quality measures, population health, care management, and patient/family engagement are simply overwhelming. Hiring more clinical FTEs to spread the work over a large team means additional costs. As such, providers spend hours each night catching up on the day's documentation and are demanding better tools/automation to reduce their strain. Hospital managers and IT experts should think about projects that could be innovative breakthroughs, replacing human work with a next generation of technology and workflow.

Consumerisation of software. BYOD devices and apps keep popping up, raising expectations. The difference between the \$2 app and the \$2 billion dollar EHR is that the \$2 app is easier to use, more convenient and possibly even more useful. EHR transactional systems are necessary to support compliance and regulatory imperatives, but hospitals increasingly will look to third party apps to provide modular functionality on top of the transactional systems, according to Dr. Halamka.

Cloud computing. The cloud is clearly the way that people want to work, the author notes. Social networking ideas of collaboration, file sharing, availability anywhere/anytime, multiple device support, and convenience are driving forces. The good news is that Amazon Web Services offers low cost, HIPAA compliant hosting/storage/groupware/mobile support.

Balance between supply and demand for IT. Creating such a balance is difficult. Stakeholders prefer to discuss the vision for the future rather than the details of allocating existing resources in the present. Incremental progress no longer feels satisfactory and users want a big leap forward. The solution to this quandary, Dr. Halamka says, is to spread work among as many parties as possible — IT, third party solution providers, business owners, power users, and energetic innovators.

Regulations impeding implementation of projects. The Affordable Care Act, Meaningful Use, and the HIPAA Omnibus rule may be the focus of regulators and legislators, but they are not the focus of most users. Stakeholders want to know when their projects will be accelerated and when the distraction of federal regulations will end. "The problem is that the agenda of most IT departments has been co-opted by federal programmes and the users are no longer willing to wait," says Dr. Halamka.

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