



NEWS RELEASE

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New Study of Physicians Using Health Information Technology in Hospitals Finds Link to Fewer Deaths, Fewer Complications, and Lower Costs

New York, NY, January 26, 2009—A [study](#) published today in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, finds that when physicians in hospitals use health information technology (health IT) to its full potential there are fewer deaths, fewer complications, and lower health care costs. The study, supported by The Commonwealth Fund and led by Ruben Amarasingham M.D., M.B.A., Associate Chief of Medicine at Parkland Health & Hospital System and Assistant Professor of Medicine at UT Southwestern Medical School and Neil Powe, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, surveyed physicians from 41 hospitals in Texas treating a diverse group of patients across a variety of conditions including heart attack, heart failure, and pneumonia.

The survey directly measures physicians using health IT in a hospital setting. Respondents were asked about their use of several different types of health IT including electronic notes and records, order entry, and clinical decision support. Researchers found that relatively modest increases in technology use had dramatic results—a 10 point increase in the use of electronic notes and medical records was associated with a 15 percent reduction in the likelihood of patient death. And, when physicians electronically entered their instructions for patient care, there was a 55 percent reduction in the likelihood of death for some procedures. Increased use of health IT was also linked to lower costs: hospitals with automated test results, order entry, and decision support experienced lower costs for all hospital admissions (-\$110, -\$132, and -\$538, respectively per admission).

“These findings tell us, straight from the physicians using it, that this technology works to improve quality of care for patients—the first priority of health information technology,” said Commonwealth Fund Vice President for Quality Improvement and Efficiency Anne-Marie Audet, M.D. “But, in order to save lives and keep costs down, health information technology has to be used to its fullest extent. As President Obama and his health care team consider investing in this technology for the nation, it would make sense to factor in on-going support and training for health care providers so that the technology can live up to its potential.”

Two additional Commonwealth Fund publications, also released today, expand on how health IT can be successfully integrated to help the U.S. create a truly high performing health care system.

- In her new [column](#), Commonwealth Fund President Karen Davis calls health IT a critical component of efforts to reform the U.S. health care system, when implemented alongside other key strategies such as payment reform and an overall commitment to performance improvement. “Just as investment in railroads, air traffic control, and interstate highways facilitated economic development and national prosperity in the 20th century, so too will the spread of health IT and the development of a national health information network

bring long-run benefits and gains to the nation in the 21st century," writes Davis. "It is crucial that our federal leadership move now to harness the power of information technology and put the nation on a path to high performance."

- In a new [“Perspectives on Health Reform” brief](#) also published today on The Commonwealth Fund Web site, David Blumenthal, M.D., director of the Institute for Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital/Partners HealthCare System and professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, outlines federal policy options for overcoming the financial, technical, and logistical obstacles to getting hospitals and doctors to adopt health IT. “The Federal Role in Promoting Health Information Technology,” recommends offering assistance for purchase and implementation of health IT to providers that lack financial means; financial support for information exchange in local communities; support for research to improve health IT capabilities; payment reform to hasten use of health IT; and creating national regulations and standards for data security and patient privacy.

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The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation supporting independent research on health policy reform and a high performance health system.