HIMSS Electronic Health Record Association

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Electronic Health Record Association
Statement of Commitment
to Patient Safety and a Learning Healthcare System
February 21, 2012

The members of the Electronic Health Record Association (the Association) believe that the safety of patients is of paramount importance. Responsibility for patient safety is shared by all participants in the healthcare community – the physicians, nurses, hospitals, health systems and other clinicians providing care to the patients; software developers and those who implement health information technology (health IT); and health information exchange (HIE) organizations. As the Institute of Medicine stated, in fact, in its November 2011 report, *Health IT and Patient Safety: Building Safer Systems for Better Care*, "…it is important to recognize that health information technology products are not used in isolation but rather as part of a larger sociotechnical system, and safety emerges from the interactions of all of these factors."

Our members are drawn from 41 companies developing health IT products and services, representing a substantial portion of the operational electronic health record (EHR) systems in the United States. We believe that EHRs advance patient safety in ways that paper records fundamentally cannot. We are joined together by a commitment to:

1. Identify and effect best practices that enable the safest possible development, adoption and use of health IT as an essential component of improving overall healthcare quality and safety
2. Promote the use of health IT to identify and reduce areas of safety and/or quality risks

This commitment also includes contributing to the development and ongoing support of the active learning health system that varied constituents agree is essential to enhancing patient safety. This important effort will require engagement by and contributions from a broad range of public- and private-sector stakeholders.

As with any component in a complex system, EHRs are subject to unintended consequences due to a variety of factors. As such, we intend to help expand and foster a broader "culture of safety" that incorporates several key features:

- Multi-stakeholder engagement from all sectors of the healthcare industry, including representation from various professions, organizations and industries, to address all safety concerns experienced in a healthcare environment; exploration of solutions that address the needs of healthcare providers of all sizes, types and locations

- A commitment to address health IT patient safety as part of the broader patient safety context and processes
- Continued acknowledgement of the risks related to health IT development, implementation and use.
- The determination to consistently conduct safe operations through adoption of industry-accepted quality assurance and usability processes, including active and open communications among healthcare providers and other constituents on any safety and quality issues
- A non-punitive environment where individuals feel safe in reporting events and "near misses" internally without fear of negative consequences, and whereby healthcare professionals and care delivery organizations feel safe reporting on these events to patient safety organizations (PSOs), thereby encouraging active facilitation, communication and support of the process by all constituents
- Assurance of appropriate analyses by providers, health IT developers, PSOs and other appropriate parties to determine the root causes of safety events, and to ensure a continual safety and usability learning loop among healthcare providers, health IT developers and others focused on patient safety, including both individually reported adverse events, as well as aggregated and systemic-level data
- Leverage the knowledge base and resources of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

Therefore, in recognition of the role that we as health IT developers play in promoting patient safety, we intend to collaborate with the broad healthcare community to identify, correct or mitigate circumstances that could diminish patient safety. We will learn from each other and reduce future risks.

- **Commitment 1:**
  As one immediate, priority action, we support and seek to participate in a demonstration project through which healthcare providers, software developers and implementers, patient safety organization (PSOs), the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) and AHRQ can evaluate the efficacy and learning potential of incorporating health IT-related information into PSO reporting and analyses.

- **Commitment 2:**
  We will contribute in-kind resources to educate providers about the PSO model, enable analyses of reported adverse events to identify root causes and effectively partner with the involved PSOs and associated agencies to ensure de-identified, aggregated information from the reports can inform the larger learning opportunity sought by the industry. As part of this engagement, we will continue our collaborative work on a standardized EHR/health IT event reporting form, definitions and processes that can be adapted for use by PSOs and vendors.

- **Commitment 3:**
  We will identify, expand and promote EHR industry best practices regarding health IT-related patient safety issues, in collaboration with other patient stakeholders, including AHRQ and PSOs.

The EHR Association calls upon all participants in the healthcare community to join us in this shared responsibility, in our belief in the power of health information technology for good, and in the larger opportunity of continuous, systemic improvement on behalf of healthcare consumers.
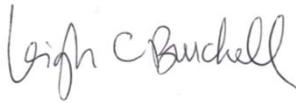
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About HIMSS EHR Association

HIMSS EHR Association is a trade association of Electronic Health Record (EHR) companies that join together to lead the health information technology industry in the accelerated adoption of EHRs in hospital and ambulatory care settings in the US. Representing a substantial portion of the installed EHR systems in the US, the association provides a forum for the EHR community to speak with a unified voice relative to standards development, the EHR certification process, interoperability, performance and quality measures, and other EHR issues as they become subject to increasing government, insurance and provider driven initiatives and requests. Membership is open to HIMSS corporate members with legally formed companies designing, developing and marketing their own commercially available EHRs with installations in the US. The association, comprised of more than 40 member companies, is a partner of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and operates as an organizational unit within HIMSS. For more information, visit http://www.himssehra.org.